Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Framingham Public Schools
District Review

Review conducted May 21-24, 2012

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Date of Report Completion: February 2013

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Overview of District Reviews

Purpose

The goal of district reviews conducted by the Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is to support districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of systemwide functions using ESE's six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management**.

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on "districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations." Districts subject to review in the 2011-2012 school years include districts that were in Level 3[1] (in school year 2011 or school year 2012) of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards (see above). The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards who review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to various district schools. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' union representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

[1] In other words, as Level 3 is defined, districts with one or more schools that score in the lowest 20 percent statewide of schools serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a).

Framingham Public Schools

The site visit to the Framingham Public Schools was conducted from May 21–24, 2012. The site visit included 34 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 90 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to district administrators and school staff to teachers' association representatives and high school students. The review team conducted focus groups with 1 elementary, 6 middle school, and 10 high school teachers. In addition, the team interviewed a number of coordinators, coaches, and other instructional support personnel from the elementary, middle, and high schools. The review team also conducted visits to 12 of the district's 13 schools: Barbieri Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Brophy Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Dunning Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Hemenway Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), McCarthy Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Potter Road Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Stapleton Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Wilson Elementary School (kindergarten through grade 5), Cameron Middle School (grades 6–8), Fuller Middle School (grades 6–8), Walsh Middle School (grades 6–8), and Framingham High School (grades 9–12). The review team did not visit the Blocks Preschool (pre-kindergarten and kindergarten). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2007–2011. Appendix D contains information about the 113 classroom observations conducted during the site visit. Appendix E contains finding and recommendation statements.

Note that any progress that has taken place since the time of the review is not reflected in this benchmarking report. Findings represent the conditions in place at the time of the site visit, and recommendations represent the team's suggestions to address the issues identified at that time.

District Profile[2]

About Framingham

Located midway between Boston and Worcester, Framingham is the largest municipality in the state with a town meeting form of government. Framingham was first settled in 1647 and incorporated in 1700; its citizens have witnessed the many milestones that framed the history of a new nation. An area known as Salem End Road was settled in the early1690s by people who fled the frenzy of the Salem witch trials. In 1770, a Framingham man, Crispus Attucks, joined the protest against the Stamp Act and became the first colonial to die in the Boston Massacre. In

[2] Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources. Historical information about Framingham is drawn from the community profile posted by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and www.framingham.com/history and www.framingham.gov.

1775, Framingham sent two companies of minutemen to battle in Lexington and Concord. After the Revolutionary War, Framingham became a stopping point for stagecoaches, followed by the railroad, bringing commercial and industrial activity to what is now the downtown area.

Before the Civil War, Framingham provided a regular gathering spot for abolitionists on Independence Day. At a July 4, 1854, anti-slavery rally in the town's Harmony Grove, William Lloyd Garrison burned copies of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and its judicial decisions as well as the United States Constitution, creating shock waves that reverberated across the country. Other prominent abolitionists present included Sojourner Truth, Wendell Phillips, Lucy Stone, and Henry David Thoreau. The first public singing of the Battle Hymn of the Republic took place in Framingham's Plymouth Church at a celebration of George Washington's birthday in 1862.

After the Civil War, the town expanded its already solid industrial base. Mills and factories prospered well into the mid-twentieth century producing woolens, carpets, shoes, paper goods, bicycles, and automobiles. Some manufacturing continues today, although most employment concentrates on the town's large, regional, retail center and medical, educational, office, and biotechnical activities.

Major population growth took place in the mid-twentieth century; population increased almost threefold from 23,214 residents in 1940 to 64,048 in 1970. The 2010 census counted 68,318 residents characterized by a diverse profile: 65.3 percent white, 5.8 percent African-American/black, 0.8 percent Native American, 6.3 percent Asian, 13.4 percent Hispanic/ Latino, 3.4 percent from two or more races, and 6.3 percent from other races. Brazilian immigrants have had a meaningful presence in Framingham since the latter part of the last century.

Framingham today provides a unique blend of both urban and rural qualities. There is the vibrant commercial and retail area running east to west along Route 9, which bisects the town. Nearby are quiet residential areas, and in the center the town common surrounded by a number of historic buildings.

The Schools

Education has consistently played a prominent role in community life. The first public normal school in America, established in 1839 by Horace Mann and Cyrus Pierce in Lexington, was relocated to Framingham in 1853. Eventually it became Framingham Normal School, then Framingham State Teachers College, and in 2010, Framingham State University.

The town hired its first schoolmaster in 1706 and built its first school in 1716. The first high school, Framingham Academy, opened in 1792 and in time closed because of the illegality of using town funds to support a private school. A successor to the academy, the first town-supported high school, opened in 1852. Two high schools, Framingham South and Framingham North, served the town from 1963 to 1991 when they were merged to form Framingham High School, which now enrolls over 2,000 students and is the sixth largest high school in the Commonwealth.

Since 1998, the town has upgraded its school buildings, replacing the former Cameron Middle School with a new building in 2002 and performing major renovations to the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, the McCarthy Elementary School, and Framingham High School. In addition, Framingham participates in the South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District. It is also the site of the Christa McAuliffe Charter School, a middle school. Framingham was the hometown of the teacher-astronaut who perished in the space shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986. Additionally, Framingham is the location of seven other independent and parochial schools.

In recent years there have been a number of leadership transitions in the Framingham Public Schools. Early in the 2011–2012 school year, the superintendent had announced that he would leave the school system at the end of June. He began his tenure in July 2009 and is the third superintendent to lead the district since 2003. In the past decade, there have been five district leaders responsible for curriculum and instruction, either as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction or director of curriculum and staff development, with both roles filled simultaneously through the 2006 school year and only one leader in place from the 2007 school year onward. After the last assistant superintendent resigned in December 2011, an interim was appointed to serve until the end of the 2011–2012 school year. Also, there have been many transitions at the school level with 10 of 13 principal positions having turned over since the 2009 school year.

Major accomplishments attributed to the current administration include building a strong working relationship between the town and the schools and planning and securing the multiyear funding needed for upgrading the schools' technology infrastructure.

As the 2011–2012 current school year came to a close, a new superintendent had been appointed and was to assume leadership on July 1, 2012, along with a new district technology director. In addition, the school committee had approved searches for a new assistant superintendent and a newly created position of director of educational operations. At the school level, the district was also set to hire assistant principals in each of the four largest elementary schools; they were to assume administrative duties to permit principals to focus on their role as instructional leaders.

In 2010–2011, the Framingham Public Schools enrolled 8, 182 students in 13 schools: one preschool, eight elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school. According to ESE data, in 2010–2011 the district was identified as a Level 3 district because three elementary schools—Brophy, Barbieri, and Wilson—were in the bottom 20 percent in the Massachusetts Accountability system, along with the Fuller Middle School. In contrast, two elementary schools—Hemenway and Potter Road—were identified as Level 1 schools.

Student Demographics

Table 1a illustrates the Framingham 2010–2011 enrollments by race/ethnicity and selected populations and compares the district to the state overall, while Table 1b does the same for 2011–2012.

Table 1a: Framingham Public Schools
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
Compared to State, 2010–2011

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State
Total enrollment	**8,182**	**100.0**	--	African-American/ Black	494	6.0	8.2
First Language not English	2,816	34.4	16.3	Asian	484	5.9	5.5
Limited English Proficient*	1,361	16.6	7.1	Hispanic/Latino	1,813	22.2	15.4
Special Education**	1,800	21.5	17.0	White	5,216	63.7	68.0
Low-income	2,694	32.9	34.2	Native American	11	0.1	0.2
Free Lunch	2,119	25.9	29.1	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	3	0.0	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	575	7.0	5.1	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	161	2.0	2.4

*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as "English language learners."
**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

Table 1b: Framingham Public Schools
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
Compared to State, 2011–2012

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State
Total enrollment	**8,172**	**100.0**	**--**	African-American/ Black	478	5.8	8.3
First Language not English	2,813	34.4	16.7	Asian	464	5.7	5.7
Limited English Proficient*	1,109	13.6	7.3	Hispanic/Latino	1,839	22.5	16.1
Special Education**	1,894	22.6	17.0	White	5,190	63.5	67.0
Low-income	2,944	36.0	35.2	Native American	9	0.1	0.2
Free Lunch	2,406	29.4	30.4	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1	0.0	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	538	6.6	4.8	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	191	2.3	2.5

Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as "English language learners."
**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

Framingham shows larger proportions of students than the state in three key subgroups—students from low-income families, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, referred to in this report as English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities. In 2012 36.0 percent of students come from a low-income family, slightly higher than the state rate of 35.2 percent. Other ESE data shows that students from low-income families are highly concentrated in the district's Level 3 elementary schools (Brophy, Barbieri, and Wilson) and the Level 3 middle school (Fuller). Framingham's proportion of students receiving special education services is 22.6 percent, higher than the 2012 state rate of 17.0 percent.

In 2012 the proportion of ELLs at 13.6 percent is nearly twice the state rate of 7.3 percent. In addition, the proportion of students whose first language is not English (FLNE), at 34.4 percent, is more than twice the state rate of 16.7 percent. Other ESE data shows that 79.5 percent of ELLs are enrolled in kindergarten through grade 5 and that this subgroup, too, is unevenly distributed across the Level 3 elementary schools (Brophy, Barbieri, and Wilson) and the Level 3 middle school (Fuller). These are schools where various programs targeted to ELLs are concentrated, attracting students from across the community.

In 2012 white students make up 63.5 percent of all students versus 67.0 percent statewide. The proportion of Hispanic/Latino students enrolled is 22.5 percent, higher than the state rate of 16.1 percent. African-American/black students represent 5.8 percent of all students, below the current statewide rate of 8.3 percent. The proportion of Asian students, at 5.7 percent, matches the 2012 state rate.

Based on ESE data, total enrollment has been relatively consistent in recent years with an increase of about 100 students since 2007. The district's stability rate (i.e., the percentage of students enrolled all year) has remained at a steady 92 or 93 percent from 2008 through 2011.

Other Student Indicators

Other student indicators reported in ESE data reveal some positive trends. The overall attendance rate reached 95.0 percent in 2011, a tad above the state rate of 94.7 percent. In addition, the proportion of students who are chronically absent, i.e., absent more than 10 percent of the 180-day school year, has decreased from 13.7 percent in 2009 to 11.5 percent in 2011. However, compared to other subgroups, Hispanic/Latino students showed a high rate of chronic absence in 2011, 19.5 percent districtwide with an even higher rate for Hispanic/Latino high school students at 30.4 percent, or almost one of every three Hispanic/Latino students at the high school.

Also noteworthy is that the four-year cohort graduation rate has dropped from 89.3 percent in 2007 to 81.1 percent in 2011. This falls below the state rate in 2011 of 83.4 percent. At the same time the annual dropout rate at the high school has fluctuated from 2.2 percent in 2007 to 3.0 percent in 2011, while statewide it has decreased from 3.8 percent in 2007 to 2.7 percent in 2011.

Financial Profile

With direction from the school committee, the current superintendent and director of business administration are credited with strengthening relationships between the town and the schools and solidifying town support for the school budget.

The district has a high level of support from the town in any case; NSS requirements were generously exceeded in the last three years. Typical of the last three years is the overage in FY11 of $34 million, 44 percent above required NSS. Total expenditures including local appropriations and grants per in-district student were $14,795 in 2011 compared to the median for similar size districts of $12,904 and the state average of $12,907.

Table 2: Framingham Public Schools
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending
Fiscal Years 2010–2012

	FY10		FY11		FY12
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
Expenditures					
From local appropriations for schools					
by school committee	86,246,829	86,308,272	88,695,969	88,690,792	91,927,323
by municipality	42,289,244	42,986,404	44,193,489	43,628,294	44,179,723
Total from local appropriations	128,536,073	129,294,676	132,889,458	132,319,085	136,107,046
From revolving funds and grants	---	18,955,310	---	16,827,504	---
Total expenditures	---	148,249,986	---	149,146,589	---
Chapter 70 aid to education program					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	16,793,161	---	19,634,107	22,024,861
Required local contribution	---	59,169,653	---	57,763,279	57,510,511
Net School Spending					
Required net school spending**	---	75,962,814	---	77,397,386	79,535,372
Actual net school spending	---	107,626,691	---	111,442,860	114,474,256
Over/under required ($)	---	31,663,877	---	34,045,474	34,938,884
Over/under required (%)	---	+41.7 %	---	+44.0 %	43.9 %

*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.

**Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.
Sources: FY10, FY11 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.
Data retrieved on September 20, 2012.

Educational Challenges

In summary, this overview describes a community and a school system that has emerged over time from its typically New England origins to become a large, diverse, and vibrant community that shares both urban and suburban characteristics. A look at the achievement status of the

district's dozen K–12 schools, as measured by the Massachusetts accountability system in 2010–2011, reveals a varied picture for student success: two Level 1 schools, six Level 2 schools, and four Level 3 schools.

With its higher proportion of students from low-income families, ELLs, Hispanic/Latino students and students with disabilities than the state as a whole, the district reflects demographics and deals with educational challenges typical of many urban districts. The choices that the district has made to concentrate many of its ELL programs in only a few schools have also intensified the responsibility of a few schools to meet the diverse language and academic needs of its highest need population. And although in 2011 the four-year cohort graduation rate fell to 81.1 percent, 2.3 percentage points below the state rate of 83.4 percent, and is clearly a call for action, it continues, however, to surpass the four-year graduation rate of the Commonwealth's largest urban communities by 10 to 30 percentage points.[3]

In addition, the several transitions in district and school leadership over the past decade have contributed some discontinuity to priority setting and follow-up at both the district and school levels. Also, the changes in district leadership for curriculum and instruction have made it more difficult for the school system to set and pursue a straightforward course toward continuous improvement that is aligned across all schools, particularly at the elementary level. One important positive contribution toward achieving this, however, has been the persistence of current district leaders to put the school district on firm financial footing, and with the support of the school committee to establish a strong working relationship with the town side of government.

The findings and recommendations that follow intend to highlight both strengths that the district can build on as well as key areas in need of further attention and development. As new leaders assume their roles, the review team believes that there is considerable human capacity and commitment in the district to harness and cultivate in order to develop a viable continuous improvement process that will prove beneficial to all students.

[3] Source: ESE's Education Data Warehouse, four-year graduation rates for 2011: Boston, 64.4 percent; Brockton, 69.4 percent; Chelsea, 54.6 percent; Chicopee, 69.7 percent; Fall River 71.0 percent; Holyoke, 49.5 percent; Lawrence, 52.3 percent; Lowell, 69.6 percent; New Bedford, 56.4 percent; Springfield, 52.1 percent; and Worcester, 72.0 percent.

Findings

Student Achievement[4]

The district's overall MCAS proficiency rates and median student growth percentiles[5] (SGPs) in ELA and mathematics remained nearly flat from 2007-2011, with differences in proficiency between the district and the state widening.

As shown in Table 3, the district's proficiency rates from 2007 to 2011 were nearly flat in both ELA and mathematics. District proficiency rates for ELA remained at 63 to 64 percent from 2007 to 2011. At the same time, an increasing proportion of students statewide scored proficient or above, from 66 percent in 2007 to 69 percent in 2011. In 2007, there was an ELA proficiency gap of 2 percentage points between the district and the state; by 2011, the gap was 5 percentage points. The district's median SGPs for ELA, which were in the moderate range (40.0-59.9), were also relatively static during this period, ranging from 49.0 to 51.0.

Table 3: Framingham Public Schools
Proficiency Rates and Median SGPs for ELA and Mathematics MCAS Results
All Grades—District and State
2007–2011

	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	% Prof/Adv	*Median SGP**	% Prof/Adv	*Median SGP*	% Prof/Adv	*Median SGP*	% Prof/Adv	*Median SGP*	% Prof/Adv	Median SGP
ELA District	64	--	63	*49*	64	*50*	64	*51*	64	49
ELA State	66	--	65	*50*	67	*50*	68	*50*	69	50
Math District	53	--	55	*49*	55	*50*	55	*50*	54	51
Math State	53	--	55	*50*	56	*50*	58	*50*	58	50

Source: District Analysis and Review Tool on ESE website
*ESE began to calculate median SGPs in 2008.

In mathematics, while the district started the period with proficiency rates equal to the state rates—53 percent in 2007 and 55 percent in 2008—by 2011 the district had fallen 4 percentage points behind the state. As in ELA, median SGPs for mathematics were in the moderate range and remained nearly flat, again ranging from 49.0 to 51.0.

[4] See Appendix C for student achievement data for ELA and mathematics. Slight variations in this report in the proficiency rates from School/District Profiles, District Analysis and Review Tool, and the Education Data Warehouse are due to differences in procedures for rounding.

[5] "Student growth percentiles" are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student's MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see "MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide" and other resources available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/.

In summary, districtwide performance for both ELA and mathematics was nearly flat from 2007 to 2011 and proficiency gaps between the district and the state were wider in 2011 than in 2007. **G**rade-level proficiency rates in 2011 were, for the most part, several points below those of the state. (See Tables C1 and C2 in Appendix C.) (The exception was the grade 10 proficiency rates: the district's 2011 grade 10 ELA proficiency rate was the same as the corresponding state rate, and its 2011 grade 10 math proficiency was 7 points above the state rate.)

Evidence of limited progress districtwide over five test administrations raises questions related to multiple systems about student learning. Is the curriculum well developed, adequate, and aligned across schools? How well have decisions about choices of instructional strategies and academic support met the learning needs of Framingham's diverse student population? Furthermore, with flat achievement over multiple test administrations, how well have the district and school leaders crafted and implemented opportunities for professional support in the form of instructional supervision, performance evaluation, and ongoing professional development to arrive at a consistently high quality of teaching? These questions foreshadow the findings below.

There were wide variations in proficiency rates across the eight elementary schools from 2007 to 2011. The differences in proficiency between the highest- and lowest-performing elementary schools widened during this period for both ELA and mathematics.

Chart 1 displays line plots tracking MCAS proficiency rates for ELA and mathematics in each of Framingham's eight elementary schools from 2007 to 2011.[6] The wide differences in ELA proficiency rates between the highest- and lowest-performing elementary schools widened from 2007 to 2011:

- In 2007, there was a difference in proficiency of 33 points between proficiency rates of the highest-performing elementary school and the lowest-: McCarthy at 76 percent and Wilson at 43 percent.
- In 2011, the difference in proficiency between the highest-performing elementary school and the lowest- had widened to 46 points: Hemenway at 79 percent and Wilson at 33 percent.

The differences in mathematics proficiency rates between the highest- and lowest-performing elementary schools were also wide, and also widened, from 2007-2011:

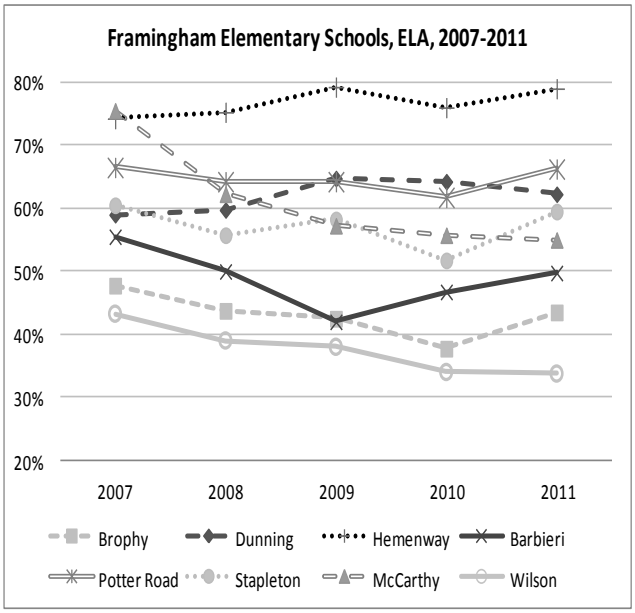
- In 2007, there was a difference in proficiency of 32 points between the highest-performing elementary school and the lowest-: Hemenway at 71 percent and Brophy at 39 percent
- In 2011, the difference in proficiency between the highest- and lowest-performing schools had widened to 41 points: Hemenway at 77 percent, Barbieri at 36 percent.

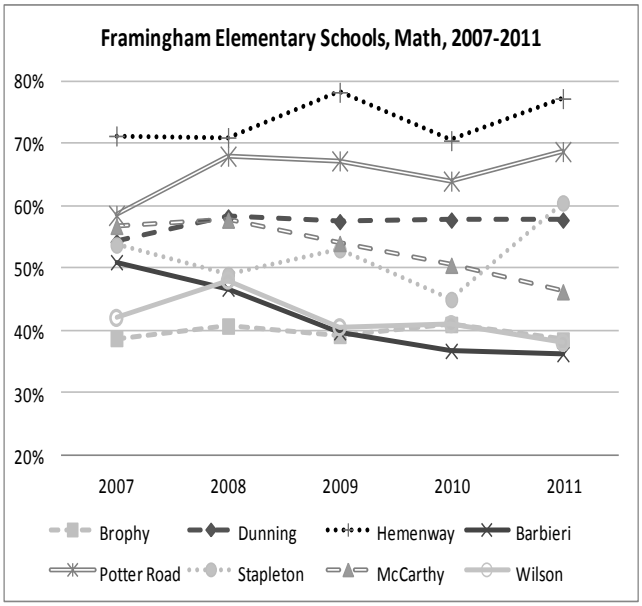
The district's three Level 3 elementary schools, Barbieri, Brophy, and Wilson, had the three lowest proficiency rates of the elementary schools in ELA and math in each year from 2007 to

[6] See Appendix C, Table C3, for the data points represented in the line plots in Chart 1.

2011. Each of these schools had a lower proficiency rate in both ELA and math in 2011 than it did in 2007. Considering that the Level 3 elementary schools educate the highest proportions of the district's ELLs and of students from low-income families, questions are raised relating to the programs and support systems in place for these students.

Chart 1: Framingham Public Schools
MCAS Proficiency Rates for ELA and Mathematics
for Each Elementary School, 2007–2011





Source: ESE Education Data Warehouse

Leadership and Governance

The district has endured frequent changes in key leadership positions at the central office as well as within the schools—particularly at the elementary level. These frequent changes in leadership at both levels, with the attendant uncertainty, have created a somewhat compartmentalized school district with many schools operating relatively independently and several important educational needs in need of attention.

Changes in Leadership

The current superintendent is completing three years of employment with the district and will depart at the end of June 2012. A new superintendent has been hired to replace him. The departing superintendent succeeded an interim superintendent who served in that capacity for two years. In an interview, the present superintendent pointed out that the district has had three superintendents in the span of nine years, adding "There is a lack of stability."

The current assistant superintendent with the status of "interim" will also leave at the end of June 2012, having served in that capacity since January of this year (2011–2012). He replaced a previous assistant superintendent who left in December 2011 after nearly two and one-half years of employment with the district (initially, as an "interim"). Four district leaders have had some responsibility for curriculum and instruction since the 2003–2004 school year.

In July 2012, a new director of technology will begin employment with the district—replacing an interim director.

Turnover within the principalships reflects that of the central office except that it has been more expansive. According to the superintendent, several principals began their tenure concurrent with his first year as superintendent and an additional number of elementary principals were hired during his time in office. ESE data identifies ten principal positions having turned over from 2009 to 2011.

Additionally, two other administrators with systemwide responsibilities, namely, the bilingual director and the special education director, have experienced two years or less of incumbency.

Effects of Changes in Leadership

Interviews with an array of employees noted the effects of leadership instability. Principals noted that the turnover in superintendents had created uncertainty about both the priority as well as the quality of teacher evaluations. Similarly, principals and directors said that administrative evaluations had been negatively affected. Another effect of changes in central office personnel, according to school administrators, was uncertainty in direction and insufficient professional development when programs, textbooks, or curriculum have been adopted. Indeed, one interviewee characterized English language arts as "the flavor of the year."

A central office administrator summarized the current condition vis-à-vis the principals by describing them as feeling "disjointed" and "uncertain about the scope of their authority" in site-based management. This was noted for three programs in particular; namely, special education, student support services, and bilingual education are being placed "in limbo" because the principals are now in charge "but don't know what to do."

The sustained and continued uncertainty about central office priorities in direction and vision was reflected in an administrator's comment to the review team that the schools are best described as "silos," and more than one administrator saying that the district itself represents "a system of schools, rather than a school system." Finally, a school committee interviewee observed that not all are "march to the same drummer."

Imbalances in Enrollment

School committee members, in several interviews, also articulated a strong perception of possible inequities in the district, noting a "clear imbalance of distribution of high-risk students" located disproportionately in the district's three Level 3 elementary schools and in one middle school. The school committee also noted that inequities in the district were "a reality" and the committee was "working to make a fair distribution of resources." Committee members reported

that they had discussed this during budget season." A number of interviewees in a student support interview also expressed similar concerns. Another interviewee said that there is a "need to redistrict but it has been delayed for more than ten years due to instability in the superintendency." The district has authorized the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) to analyze school choice, specifically, in-district parental choice of schools and its relationship to the current enrollment imbalance.

The review team concludes that this ongoing instability in leadership has had a negative impact on supervision and evaluation, hindered curriculum development, impeded vertical and horizontal articulation of curriculum and instruction, prevented the smooth adoption of best instructional practices throughout the district, and has ultimately negatively affected prospects for improved student achievement. It has also stalled efforts to consider the current inequities present in the location of programs for high-risk students and concentration of these students in the district's lowest performing schools. Without the development of a common longer-term vision with a PK–12 perspective championed by a stable leadership cohort at both the central office and school levels, it will be difficult for the district to significantly ameliorate the current condition.

The district does not have an updated Strategic Plan. There is evidence that the development of a long-term vision for the school district, under the leadership of the new superintendent, is a priority for the school committee.

Three separate, simultaneous interviews with the school committee evinced a strong recognition of the need for a Strategic Plan for the district. One member expressed the belief that because the financial relationship with the town had substantially improved and the budget-building process had stabilized, it would be an opportune time to engage in a strategic planning process. Another school committee member noted that "we do lack a strategic direction, a Strategic Plan. That's one of the things we want from the new superintendent."

In discussing the need for a Strategic Plan with the review team, the school committee posited a timeline of three to five years for a Strategic Plan, noting that this would enable the school committee to move beyond the one-year focus of the District Improvement Plan (DIP). This timeline was consistent with the hope expressed by the school committee that the advent of the new superintendent would coincide with the beginning of more stability in school district leadership. In negotiating a contract with the new superintendent, the school committee expressed a desire that he would remain for five to ten years, recognizing "the need for stability of leadership in the schools." An interview indicated that employing a superintendent with a long-term commitment to the school district was also an attribute eagerly sought by the teachers' association.

District leaders have with the support of the school committee established a strong working relationship with the town side of government. With the development of a Strategic Plan a priority for the school committee, under the leadership of the new superintendent, the district is poised to move beyond the one-year focus of the District Improvement Plan, to align its goals

across the schools, and to provide direction and clarity of vision in all aspects of teaching and learning in the Framingham Public Schools for multiple years.

More than a perception, there is an unequivocal and widespread conviction by interviewees that the district does not have the requisite number of leaders to engage in key administrative and leadership functions of the district. Among these functions is the ability to properly evaluate administrative and instructional personnel as well as the capability of developing and maintaining a consistent, coherent, and relevant curriculum.

In recent years, the district has eliminated several key positions such as director of curriculum and staff development, K–8 ELA director, K–8 mathematics director, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and the director of technology. Some of these roles have been held in intervals by interim appointees.

Roles of the Superintendent and Administrators

The centrality of the role of the superintendent of schools is integral to the success of a school district. In an interview, the superintendent of schools said that he ended up doing a number of tasks himself because there was an absence of subordinates to whom these tasks would customarily be delegated. Similarly, principals recognized that their presumed role as instructional leaders was compromised because they had to assume certain responsibilities in the absence of another administrator within each of their schools. Implicit in these assertions by the superintendent and the principals is the recognition that they may not have been able to properly prioritize some of their responsibilities because of demands on their time. For example, in an interview the superintendent noted that he had attended 85 meetings involving the school committee in the previous year.

In three areas in particular, namely, a proposed reorganization of the schools, the improvement of the financial relationship with town officials, and the presentation of significant amounts of data and reports, members of the school committee were satisfied with the performance of the superintendent. In the area of school reorganization, i.e., the study of school choice within the district, one school committee member noted that "we set Steve [the superintendent] up for some trouble in his first year . . . ultimately, we put it on hold." Another observation in this context came from teachers' association representatives who said that the superintendent "is located in our building and I never see him. He was hired to mend fences with the town, mistakenly threw himself full force into that; has done a wonderful job getting the finances into shape; the town respects the schools more now; but communication with faculty is not there. . . ."

Effects of Changes in Leadership

In several interviews, administrators informed the review team that the elimination of leaders in both science and social studies had affected curriculum alignment and had created "differences across and among schools" because, with regard to curriculum review in these two subject areas, "very little had been done over the years."

The absence of supervisory and evaluative personnel has affected both supervision and the personnel evaluation process. Teacher evaluations are filed, but are not reviewed by the central office administration; and administrative evaluations are not conducted annually. Based on principals' reports of the varied frequency of classroom walkthroughs, there has been no consistent supervisory process in place in the district to monitor the quality of instruction.

Concerns were expressed by teachers about the infrequency of evaluations. At the high school, it was reported that the frequency varies but "overall it does not happen enough, especially after achieving professional teaching status." Representatives from the teachers' association also expressed concern about the irregularity of teacher evaluations—particularly at the elementary level. The association representatives told review team members that an inquiry to the human resources office about teacher evaluations at a particular school for the 2010–2011 school year disclosed that "75 percent of Non-PTS staff were not evaluated once during the school year." Absent an emphasis on personnel evaluation the quality of instruction inevitably falters, and student achievement, along with the necessary support services, does not receive the preeminent position that it deserves.

Opportunities at the Time of the Review

The district is poised to bring new leadership to the district. At the central office, money has been approved to hire a permanent (rather than an "interim") assistant superintendent. Also, a director of educational operations with curriculum development responsibilities is scheduled to be hired soon. Finally, a director of technology is scheduled to begin employment with the district on July 1, 2012. These additional central office personnel will complement the hiring of four assistant principals at the four larger elementary schools. As noted by one of the elementary principals, the present situation—operating without an assistant principal—prevents that principal, "from delving into what you need to be the instructional leader."

These initial steps in leadership and administrative expansion, along with the NESDEC review noted earlier, have the prospect of establishing a threshold for improvements in leadership for both curriculum development and personnel evaluation, and equally important, could provide a standard for distributing student services more equitably. In addition, the advent of new leadership in the district offers an occasion to take a census of the district's strengths and areas in need of improvement and provides the opportunity to consider longer-term strategic as well as tactical solutions to key district challenges.

Curriculum and Instruction

In many cases, curriculum documentation is uncoordinated and missing several critical elements. In some cases, standards provide the only guide to curriculum and in others, instructional strategies, resources, and assessments are omitted. The curriculum generally does not show vertical alignment and is aligned only informally across some grades. The district does not have a systematic cycle for review and revision of curriculum.

Curriculum Districtwide

The district makes most curriculum documents available to teachers, parents, and students, as well as to the public, by putting them on a Wiki space. This improves access and provides transparency, which should be recognized as a positive. In 2009–2010, the district compiled a Curriculum Digest for kindergarten through grade 8 to "…introduce parents and students to the Framingham Elementary Student Outcomes. The outcomes listed under each grade level curriculum are highlights for each area." This family-friendly "brochure" giving a brief overview of curriculum by grade and subject is another good example of Framingham's public access.

In reviewing curriculum documents, however, the review team found that in many cases, documents are uncoordinated. In only one content area— English Language Arts (ELA)—do they extend from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and align with state frameworks. This Pre-K–12 document includes some resource suggestions as well as strands and standards. For grades 3–5 there are also ELA curriculum maps with suggested timelines. These two documents represent the "guiding curriculum documents" for ELA, developed in 2007. In PreK–8 mathematics, curriculum documents consist basically of lists of standards and a Topic Sequence matrix that visually aligns mathematics standards, by number, from the kindergarten through grade 8 levels.

High School Curriculum

Documents for the high school curriculum in mathematics and science are much more complete. The high school mathematics documents, for example, include guiding principles (standards), suggestions for collaboration with a focus on effective instruction, assessment, and technology suggestions for web sites and online texts. The curriculum also includes characteristics of high-quality math instruction such as links to prior knowledge, conceptual understanding, self-regulating problem solving, direct instruction, cooperative learning techniques, graphic organizers, think-pair-share, JIGSAW, word splashes, sorts, take-home problems, and unit quizzes. Curriculum documents for high school science include timelines, essential questions, suggested assessments, and content and learning standards.

The high school ELA documents include course outlines and a course sequence chart and make no connections to the Pre-K–12 document referring to strands and standards cited above. Staff members told the review team that the curriculum in English is not strongly aligned by grade-level courses and that there are few common expectations across the department for what

students will learn or be able to do. However, one staff member noted that "certain expectations will be met."

Elementary and Middle School Curricula

In K–5 science there are curriculum unit guides developed in 2003 that are based on state standards. These include some assessment suggestions, vocabulary, and resources. In middle school science there is a document, recently presented to the school committee, which includes a list of standards and units for grades 6–8, a list of texts, and a list of capstone activities. More complete documents for those grades, written in 2004, include standards, student outcomes, learning experiences, a few assessments, videos, and software recommendations. Most of the documents do not include all the elements of a comprehensive curriculum document such as objectives, assessments, timelines, instructional strategies, and resources. In fact, many documents are sparse in content. Staff members noted that many are not used. With the exception of the high school mathematics curriculum, the district curriculum documents make little mention of instructional strategies.

Curriculum Alignment

Curriculum is not vertically aligned and is aligned across only a few grade levels. Both teachers and administrators said that there are no formal meetings between middle-school and high-school teachers or between elementary- and middle-school teachers in which discussions about curriculum alignment could take place. Coordinators said that this is something that needs to be done. They added that they believe that there is a need to address curriculum organization and instruction to have better vertical articulation and transitions between grades 5 and 6 and grades 8 and 9 when students change schools. Currently there are no K–12 curriculum coordinators in ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, or bilingual education. Part-time ELA and mathematics coordinators exist from kindergarten through grade 8, and there are ELA and mathematics department heads for the middle schools and the high school. There has not been a permanent technology director for several years. In response to a question about challenges to improve student achievement in the district, one school committee member identified the need to have a coherent system, one that had better horizontal and vertical communications. This clearly extends to the curriculum also.

Informal alignment across classrooms takes place in many grade-level meetings at the elementary schools where new teachers rely on colleagues, specialists, and coaches to support their implementation of the curriculum. When asked about curriculum in interviews, staff members said that there is no cycle for review or revision of the curriculum and that this type of curriculum work had not taken place since 2007. One staff member told the team that "the whole K–12 alignment happens in a pocket."

At the high school there are many courses that have multiple sections. In some disciplines, curriculum documents demonstrate a structure that aligns topics across course sections. In others, such as in ELA, there is no document that suggests alignment and administrators said that teachers have autonomy in the choice of books that students will read. Administrators told the

review team that the ELA curriculum is not strongly aligned by grade-level courses. With some exceptions, such as in grade 9, there are only a few common expectations across the department for what students will learn or be able to do.

Review and Revision of Curriculum

Framingham has many uncoordinated and non-comprehensive curriculum documents that the district is in the process of updating to meet the requirements of the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Directors and coordinators told the review team that currently there are both mathematics and ELA committees working to develop some units of study, update other curriculum units, and align curriculum documents to the Common Core Standards. It is unclear whether or not the decision to update the curriculum is coming from the district or from the schools or from the departments since there is no current cycle of revision established in the district. Administrators told the review team that there is no systemic structure to conduct curriculum reviews from year to year. As these committees engage in this work to align and develop curriculum, they may well move beyond descriptions of curriculum and include instructional strategies, so that teachers will have guidance in knowing how best to teach specific topics as well as what to teach. The committees may also provide impetus to the district to establish an ongoing process of review and revision as well.

Conclusion

In their current state, the documents are indicative of a district that has not kept particularly current in documentation requirements. The absence of critical elements such as instructional strategies, assessments, resources, timelines, and learning objectives represents a serious omission. The omission of these elements reduces many curriculum documents to lists that are largely unusable and do not have importance for teachers. The district does not have a cycle for review or revision of curriculum. The district does not have a plan, or collaborative meeting patterns, in which curriculum alignment could take place, Pre-K–12. It is hard to see how the district will be able to align the curriculum Pre-K–12 without a dedicated process with which to engage in this work, without dedicated staff who have a clear understanding of these documents and of their connections to school and district plans, and without time set aside to do this work. In addition, the district does not have a Strategic Plan that would prioritize curriculum renewal and alignment. It is very encouraging to learn that the district will be hiring a new director of educational operations for the next school year as well as a new assistant superintendent. These positions are critically important to a district in which the curriculum can benefit from expert leadership and direction.

Instructional practices vary across the district. There are too few commonalities in lesson structure and teaching characteristics to suggest that the district has developed a shared understanding of high-quality instructional practices.

Positive Instructional Characteristics

Across the district, classrooms provide foundational supports upon which to build a good educational experience for students. Based on observations, the review team found that the climate in almost all classrooms was positive. Relationships between students and teachers were respectful and students followed established rules of behavior embedded in the culture of the schools. The review team observed that teachers were prepared, were very articulate, and showed strong content knowledge. Lessons were well paced, with little down time, and teachers used appropriate wait time when posing questions to students. All these elements set the scene for good instruction and form the basis of solid pedagogy. They provide confirmation of work that has taken place to promote them.

Understanding, Implementing, and Monitoring High-Quality Instruction

In the district, however, there is evidence of little common understanding among administrators as to what constitutes good instruction. When asked in interviews, staff members seemed to struggle to state their understanding of the characteristics of good teaching. In an interview with principals, they agreed that everyone in the room would have a different definition of quality instruction as well. It is not surprising that in light of the absence of an agreed-upon and articulated vision shared by leaders and teachers, familiarity with current research-based instructional practices is limited. The absence of systemwide coordinators (for several years, in the case of math) has also contributed to this phenomenon. In the elementary schools, however, the development of the balanced literacy approach has helped staff to understand the role of differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, small-group work, and student self-assessment, to name a few, as components of good instruction and to implement them in practice. When the review team observed classroom lessons, there were very few instances of differentiated or tiered instruction in classrooms other than in elementary ELA classes.

In the middle schools, it was curious to see that the district had reduced the actual time-on-task in mathematics from 56 minutes to 45 minutes this year (in 2011–2012), even though in 2011 most middle-school students had not achieved proficiency in mathematics.[7] According to some administrators, this is because some mathematics has been integrated into the new literacy lab classes. Research suggests that time-on-task is a critical element for success in any subject. Staff members noted that there is a need for a "more systemic organizational structure with clear vision around instruction."

Teachers told the review team that the practice of monitoring instructional practice through walkthroughs varies. There is no districtwide expectation for this type of supervision to take

[7] In 2011, according to ESE data, 47 percent of grade 6 students scored proficient or higher in math, 45 percent of grade 7 students scored proficient or higher, and 51 percent of grade 8 students scored proficient or higher.

place, although principals have had professional development to conduct walkthroughs. The superintendent noted that the district had lost focus on this process. Evaluations, which do not take place in a timely or systemic way, also are less likely to be a source of generating discussions about quality instruction.

There are limited opportunities for teachers and department heads to discuss instruction. Administrators said that teachers needed common planning time to bring changes to scale in the district. Time allotted for common planning varies across the district from a dedicated period in the middle schools to the voluntary use of prep time in some of the elementary schools and in some high school departments. Teaching staff expressed frustration with the absence of time to meet and principals were frustrated with the absence of time to come together as an instructional team, saying that there is no formal structure to provide a forum for them to talk to each other. One administrator told the team that there is very little time to have instructional conversations with staff. Heads nodded in agreement. Administrators told the review team that school committee policy states that principals can call meetings as needed, then adding, "however, we run into practice, policy and interpretation of the collective bargaining agreement," thus making it difficult to find regularly scheduled times to meet.

Technology

A technology budget was recently approved for a two-million-dollar technology upgrade over several years that began this school year (2011–2012). Teachers reported that in some schools computers are 10 years old. With the new technology initiative, new laptops and interactive whiteboards were seen in classrooms, as well as new overhead LCD projectors. Although there has been no permanent technology director in the district for some time, the district has hired one for the 2012–2013 school year to replace an interim director.

Data Collection and Review

Because data teams are also being started in all schools, the use of data to determine needs of students and implications for curriculum and instruction is also in the elementary stages of development. In the elementary a promising data collection and review procedure called Grade Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs) has been taking place since 2010. Coordinators described how grade-level data teams are working to identify student-learning problems and analyzing data to understand by grade level impediments to student achievement. Teachers, said one administrator, need to understand why we are doing this data analysis and currently some are still not quite sure. The teams are beginning to use data to inform instruction. For example, the LIFT (Literacy is Framingham's Target) initiative, in which teachers provide flexible grouping for students, takes place in the middle schools and group composition is based on data analysis.

Classroom Observations

The review team collected information about instructional characteristics in 113 classrooms, observing 63 classes in kindergarten through grade 5, 28 classrooms in grades 6, 7 and 8, and 22 classrooms in grades 9–11, including the Thayer Campus. (Seniors had already been dismissed

for the year.) All review team members used ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for observing characteristics of standards-based teaching and learning to record their observations.

The tool contains 35 characteristics within 10 categories: classroom climate, learning objectives, use of class time, content learning, instructional techniques, activation of higher-order thinking, instructional pacing, student thinking, student groups, and use of student assessment. Review team members are asked to note when they observe or do not observe a characteristic and record evidence of a characteristic on a form. Descriptive comments are included if the observer sees exemplary evidence. Several of these comments are included in this report to provide examples of observed teaching characteristics.

(Please see Appendix D, Table D1, for a summary table showing these 10 categories as observed across school levels. Tables D2 through D5 provide a summary of the 35 classroom characteristics as observed by school level.)

There was wide variation in observed instructional practices in the district. In some classrooms, observers noted that teachers were using current, research-based, instructional practices. However, in many observed classes this was not the case.

Classroom Climate

The overall observed incidence of the four characteristics in this category was 89 percent of observed classrooms at the elementary level, 68 percent of visited classes at the middle-school level, and 80 percent of observed classrooms at the high-school level. Observers noticed that students acted in accordance to rules and procedures and that students and teachers had positive relationships. Further, in the elementary and high-school classrooms, teachers set high expectations for learning and conveyed those to students. At the middle-school level high expectations were set and conveyed to students in 32 percent of observed classrooms. In most classrooms, the behavioral and procedural rules appeared understood rather than posted, although in the elementary grades some classrooms had posted rules and behavioral norms.

Learning Objectives

The overall observed incidence of the three characteristics in this category in which the objective is clearly posted, referenced or explained, and consists of an identified learning outcome, not a task or activity for the student, which drives the lesson, was 28 percent of observed classrooms in the elementary schools, 22 percent of visited classes in the middle school, and 45 percent of observed classrooms in the high school. A reviewer found a good example of a learning objective that was not just a description of a task. It read, "Students will be able to determine whether an equation or inequality is sometimes true, never true, or always true." In other words, the teacher described what he wanted the students to know, understand, or be able to do by the end of the class. This was in sharp contrast to a mere description of an activity, such as "Students will finish the essay from yesterday." Although there were a few learning objectives actually posted on the board, in most of the classrooms observed teachers provided an oral description of the task to be done that day but seldom gave the learning goal. When teachers use a written

learning goal(s) for each lesson, it allows both the teacher and the students to assess whether or not they have met the goal, perhaps using a rubric as well.

Use of Class Time

In effective use of class time, teachers are prepared, materials are ready, and classroom routines and transitions are smooth. The overall observed incidence of these three characteristics was 90 percent at the elementary level, 68 percent at the middle-school level, and 74 percent at the high-school level.

Content Learning

In this category, observers look to see how students connect to prior knowledge, engage with the curriculum and instructional resources in a variety of ways, including technology, to accommodate their learning styles or readiness and enhance their learning. They also observe the appropriateness of the content and students' application of new knowledge. The overall observed incidence of the seven characteristics in this category was 58 percent at the elementary level, 52 percent at the middle-school level, and 49 percent at the high-school level. It was clear from observations that there is very little differentiated or tiered instruction beyond the elementary balanced literacy program where an observer made note of the following: "Students are working in centers. Different groups are doing different activities, rotating when needed. Groups are reading, listening, matching similar images, and playing letter games." Another observer saw the same type of class, and noted that the reading groups were all using different books, as their learning needs were being addressed. There were no differentiated, tiered classroom activities observed in the high school and such activities were observed only in one classroom in the middle school. Many observers' notes stated: "Students are all doing the same thing." and "All groups are doing the same thing."

Instructional Techniques

Instructional techniques include lectures, Q & A sessions, modeling, as well as guided practice, small group/pair learning, and independent practice. The overall observed incidence of the three characteristics in this category was 54 percent at the elementary level, 46 percent at the middle-school level, and 43 percent at the high-school level.

Across the district in observed classes the preferred content-learning mode was direct, whole-group instruction based on lectures, Q & A, and modeling. The frequency with which these strategies were used increased through the grade levels in observed classrooms. Conversely, the use of small groups or pairs of students working together without direct instruction decreased through the grade levels. An observer noted: "Working on factoring trinomials, this teacher-centered lesson did provide opportunities for students to practice in small groups and discuss, as the teacher worked through the factoring on the board." In a similar class, an observed noted that the "student factored the equations at the board, explained her thinking to the class as she went through the steps, taking questions from other students and the teacher as she completed the factoring." These examples were rare. The vast majority of classes were observed to be teacher

centered in which students had little authority to demonstrate their thinking and sat compliantly and somewhat passively.

Activation of Higher-Order Thinking

Activation of higher-order thinking takes place when students are asked to examine, analyze, or interpret information, or when students form predictions, develop arguments, evaluate or reflect on their own thinking, or generate questions to clarify or pose a new question related to the lesson goal. The overall observed incidence of the four characteristics in this category was 30 percent in observed classrooms at the elementary level, 39 percent in observed classes at the middle-school level, and 43 percent in observed classrooms at the high-school level. Students in observed classrooms in both the middle school and high school used examining, analyzing, predicting, and evaluating to a fair degree. However, at no level were students seen to any degree asking clarifying questions, or being asked to reflect on their own progress. Most observers noted that teachers' voices dominated lessons. In one example of students' evaluation and reflection on their own thinking, an observer noted, "There was some discussion about the students' work (poetry) and then students were asked to explain their answers." In a mathematics class an observer noted that "Some students were asking questions in groups; some asked the teacher when she came by the group." These examples were not common and for the most part observers noted a significant amount of teachers' requesting recall of information in observed classes as opposed to asking students to evaluate, analyze, and apply knowledge.

Instructional Pacing

In this category the pace of the class encourages student engagement and teachers use wait-time to maximize student participation. The overall observed incidence of the two characteristics in this category was 83 percent of classes visited at the elementary level, 66 percent of classes visited at the middle-school level, and 64 percent of classes visited at the high-school level.

Student Thinking

In this category, observers look to see that students are engaged in instructional strategies such as "think-pair-share" or "turn-and-talk" and are given opportunities to represent their thinking and ideas in writing or verbally. The overall observed incidence of the two characteristics in this category was 36 percent at the elementary level, 41 percent at the middle-school level, and 21 percent at the high-school level. Review team members noted a number of missed opportunities for this characteristic in which students could have explored a problem or a question together or in pairs, if teachers had provided an opening for this more active learning approach. Although opportunities for students to represent their ideas and thinking either orally or in writing in a large group setting were observed more often, they were still not robust in observed classes in the district.

Student Groups

In this category, students inquire, explore or solve problems together in small groups or pairs, and they are held accountable for their contributions to the group work. The overall observed

incidence of the two characteristics in this category was 27 percent at the elementary level, 20 percent at the middle-school level, and 11 percent at the high-school level. The overall use of effective grouping, not just group seating, was limited in observed classrooms in the district, and notably absent in the high school. One observer noted that "The students are sitting in small groups, but seem to be working independently." In one example of pairing, the observer noted that "Students were working in pairs on a poetry lesson and the teacher was circulating, monitoring the students and checking for understanding with each group."

Student Assessment

For student assessment techniques, the observer looks to see whether teachers use at least one informal assessment (e.g., thumbs up, ticket to leave, etc.) to check for student understanding and adjusts their teaching on the spot in light of informal or formal assessment. Also, students receive feedback in relation to lesson goal(s) and can then revise their work based on teacher feedback. The overall observed incidence of the four characteristics in this category was 33 percent at the elementary level, 23 percent at the middle-school level, and 35 percent at the high-school level. There were only a few examples of classroom assessments in the observed lessons. In one ELA class, an observer noted that "students were given an introductory quiz to begin the class, which served as a homework check." In another class, an observer noted that "the teacher gave the students a ticket to leave, after she looked at their work." In most visited classes, checking homework was observed as a way to check for understanding. However, there were fewer instances of ongoing, in-the-moment checking for understanding as the lessons moved along. In one fine example of in-the-moment assessment, an observer noted that "the teacher moves from group to group, making suggestions and giving students feedback. Students revise their work for the next problem."

Conclusion

In summary, although classroom climate and expectations for learning were well developed, observed lessons did not routinely reflect the consistent use of research-based best practices at all school levels. Lessons were often teacher-centered using whole-group instruction. There was little posting or explanation of learning objectives in observed classrooms. On-the-spot, formative assessments of classroom learning were infrequently observed as was the inclusion of critical and higher-order thinking skills in lessons. Observed lesson characteristics indicated that the district has not clarified and prioritized the qualities of good instructional practice. When combined with limited targeted professional development to support the acquisition of these pedagogical skills and knowledge and only sporadic discussions about teaching between leaders and teachers, observed classrooms reflected limited use of effective instructional practices. Without increased professional conversations, guidance, and modeling of good practices and without the application of more effective supervisory and evaluation procedures, instruction cannot more successfully engage students and stretch them, requiring them to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge. Without such direction from district and subject-level leaders, it is difficult to see how student achievement for all students can be improved.

Assessment

The district is making progress in establishing a balanced assessment system that informs and guides decision-making, though the comprehensive use of multiple assessment formats and practices is not yet evident in all subjects at all grade levels.

Multiple Assessments and Assessment Formats

In addition to MCAS results, the district is making progress in its use of multiple assessment formats (i.e., formative, benchmark, summative, and authentic) to measure student progress and achievement and to inform improvement decisions for curriculum and instruction. Yet, there is still variability across schools as well as within academic disciplines in terms of how balanced the assessment system is and how well information gleaned from assessments contributes to curricular and instructional decisions. In addition, multiple forms of assessment are administered inconsistently across subjects and grade levels.

Assessments at the Elementary-School Level

Among the many ELA assessments at the elementary level are Letter ID and Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words in kindergarten and grade 1, Words Their Way spelling inventories in grades 3–5, and the Developmental Reading Assessment-2 (DRA2) in kindergarten through grade 5. Teachers use DRA2 results to guide literacy instruction, determine flexible groups for instruction and interventions, and monitor reading progress. In mathematics, elementary students take common unit tests from the Think Math program as pre- and post-tests. In some schools, these assessments also guide flexible grouping for instruction and interventions. Students in kindergarten through grade 2 are interviewed by teachers to assess benchmark mathematics skills and these results also determine student groups. Interviews were described as time consuming and not consistently done across schools. For mathematics in grades 3–5, common, grade-level, standards-based benchmark assessments are given twice a year; however, interviewees noted these assessments are optional in grade 3. Teachers use Test Wiz for analysis of mathematics benchmark assessments.

Assessments at the Middle-School Level

At the middle school, in addition to classroom assessments, students take common, subject-based vocabulary tests in each subject. In mathematics, benchmark assessments are intended to be given three times a year in grades 6–8; however, the review team was told that these assessments are also inconsistently administered and were not given in grade 6 in 2011–2012. Middle-school students also take common chapter tests from the Impact Math program. The IOWA Algebra Readiness test as well as MCAS and other indicators are used to screen grade 7 students for eligibility to take algebra in grade 8. Finally, grade 8 students take common final exams in core subjects in preparation for high school.

In addition, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests are now given in ELA and mathematics twice a year in grades 3–5 and three times a year in grades 6–8. Although it was noted in the district's Assessment Matrix that MAP tests were intended for use once a year in grade 9, it was stated in an interview that the MAP test is not given in the high school because it is too complicated to schedule. MAP tests monitor student progress in knowledge and skills tested on MCAS and provide additional data for grouping as well as planning for instruction and interventions.

Literacy specialists, math coaches, middle school department heads (there is one for ELA and math for all three middle schools) and the K-8 coordinators for ELA and mathematics (part-time roles) monitor the implementation of assessments and the collection, analysis, and dissemination of assessment data. They also work with teachers to help them analyze data, identify trends, and define next steps in instruction and what interventions to use at specific grade levels. As a result, teachers have some direction to adjust instructional strategies and identify topics to reteach in class. These are described in more detail in the second Assessment finding below.

For several years, however, there has been no curriculum leadership for science and social studies in kindergarten through grade 8. As a result, teachers are somewhat left to their own devices about what to teach, when to teach it, and by inference, how to assess students' knowledge, understanding and skills in these two disciplines. Interviewees noted that teachers try to collaborate for science and social studies, adding that the absence of leadership presents challenges for alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The K–8 social studies curriculum documents do not include assessment models or strategies. They mainly include topics of study, some resources, and in the case of the elementary schools, skills to develop for each unit such as map reading and observational skills. Science curriculum documents and assessments through grade 8 are more developed. They make suggestions for assessments and assessment formats and there are benchmark tests for grades 6–8. Without curriculum leadership, however, it is unclear that teachers learn and apply knowledge from administering the assessments to improve curriculum and instruction. It is also unclear whether or not teachers are convened to discuss these assessment results.

Assessments at the High-School Level

In addition to the usual quizzes, tests, papers, and projects (many projects were observed posted in high-school classrooms and on corridor walls), high-school students take either common exams or exams with common elements for mid-terms and finals in mathematics, science, history, and social science classes. The mathematics department gives both formal (summative) and informal (formative) assessments and other common assessments as a department and analyzes and uses assessment data to adjust instruction and fine-tune or modify the curriculum. The high school science department shares common lab rubrics and is currently developing common mid-terms for like courses. Data from science exams is analyzed using Mastery Manager, even down to the student level, to help teachers plan for instruction that addresses student learning needs. Documentary evidence submitted to the review team described how the world language department also uses rubrics to evaluate students' speaking skills in midterms

and finals. The English department includes a departmental grammar assessment as part of its midterms and final exams. Other assessments in English are classroom specific, mainly because of the absence of commonality of reading materials across classes of the same course or level, although some sharing of materials does take place.

At all school levels, writing prompts and on-demand writing exercises and assignments are administered multiple times a year. They are used to track the development of students' writing skills and to identify topics for reinforcement and reteaching. Interviewees noted that the intensity and frequency of using writing prompts and writing exercises varies across elementary schools. At the high school, writing prompts in English also vary from teacher to teacher even for the same course. Writing folders are kept for high school students' writing assignments; the department head samples these for consistency and alignment. There are no common writing rubrics for English writing assignments or for research papers in English for grades 9–12; teachers provide their own with some sharing among teachers. However, common writing rubrics are used for essays in history and the social sciences.

Formative Assessments

When asked about the use of formative assessments, interviewees indicated a variation in expertise across the district to effectively develop and use formative assessments. Principals agreed that teachers say they do them, noting that they, as leaders, needed to do more to ensure that teachers keep good data records and then use the data. Some formative and informative assessments at the elementary level are embedded in the daily instructional strategies used for Readers' Workshop because the balanced literacy program requires constant checking of students' reading comprehension and vocabulary both in small groups as well as one on one.

In mathematics, pre-tests provide formative guidance for grouping students in flexible groups and for planning instruction. When asked how teachers assess students' mathematical understanding as opposed to knowing the correct answer, principals gave mixed responses. One noted that that they "had not done a good job leading this." Another responded that in kindergarten through grade 5 there was a lot of teacher-student interaction and "math talk" such as asking students to explain answers, to prove answers, and occasions to ask the class whether anyone got a different answer. Elementary principals also observed that unlike Readers' Workshop, the Think Math curriculum does not build in as many opportunities to use formative assessments. One leader explicitly noted that the capacity to use common formative classroom assessments for learning and use data from common formative assessments needed more development in kindergarten through grade 8. These assessments were described in district documents as writing samples and other student work as well as students' self-assessments and performance assessments.

Finally, the gifted and talented program, the special education program, and the bilingual program have each selected appropriate assessments to screen students for placement and, in the case of special education and bilingual education, to monitor student progress and plan for program support, including some testing conducted entirely in Spanish and Portuguese.

Concerns about Assessments

Interviewees expressed concerns about the usefulness of data from MAP tests at the elementary level given the time, expense, and commitment that the district has made to MAP testing under the leadership of a prior assistant superintendent. While MAP tests can help demonstrate progress in attaining the school improvement goals to identify one year of growth in ELA and mathematics and can help predict success in MCAS, interviewees noted that results do not always yield enough useful or appropriate information to improve teaching and learning. For example, interviewees explained that the MAP mathematics test's RIT scores for grades 3–5 do not drill down deeply enough to help teachers plan for instruction. In addition, they described issues inhibiting the effective use of ELA RIT scores for grades 3–5, telling the review team that scores do not factor in fluency, the reading covers only short passages, there is no writing component, and the open-response questions do not indicate which instructional issues teachers should address. And because MAP data is proprietary to the test developer, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), the coordinators and teachers cannot access the information needed to use MAP results more effectively.

In contrast, interviewees described that at the middle schools, MAP tests have finally provided a common assessment to use across classrooms and schools to measure progress, compare students to a national norm, and group students for instruction, especially for Literacy Lab sessions. Interviewees also noted that middle-school teachers have had many more opportunities for professional development in how to use MAP test reports than elementary teachers have had.

Middle-school benchmark assessments for science and the benchmark (cumulative) assessments for mathematics are shared via the Wiki site. The science assessments, as posted, fall short in asking students to demonstrate rigorous understanding of concepts and skills because the testing format includes almost all multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or true/false questions with only one or two requests to explain an answer in an open-ended, narrative response. The mathematics cumulative assessments do require students to compute several problems as "short answers" and ask students to show and explain how they got their answers in the final set of questions. When asked in a focus group about their experiences with assessment, high-school students noted that their exams included not only recall but also analysis. They added that they did not get a lot of feedback from examinations and the feedback they did receive was not always timely.

Observed Evidence of Classroom Assessments

Further evidence of how assessments were used was derived from classroom observations. The review team observed 113 classrooms in the district for evidence of four characteristics related to assessment.

- Evidence that at least one informal assessment aligned to the lesson goals was used to check for understanding was noted in 46.0 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in 46.4 percent of visited middle-school classrooms, and in 36.4 percent of observed high-school classrooms.

- Teachers adjusted instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessments in 25.4 percent of visited elementary classrooms, 14.3 percent of observed middle-school classrooms, and 18.2 percent of visited high-school classrooms.
- Students received feedback that told them where they were in relation to the learning goals in 33.3 percent of observed elementary classrooms, 14.3 percent of visited middle-school classrooms, and 40.9 percent of observed high-school classrooms.
- Finally, students revised their work based on feedback in 27.0 percent of visited elementary classrooms, 17.9 percent of observed middle-school classrooms, and 45.5 percent of visited high-school classrooms.

Linking Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

As noted in the Curriculum findings above, current curriculum documents are incomplete or outdated and only a few include assessments or identify appropriate assessment strategies to use for particular units of study. In interviews, principals and coordinators attributed this to the stripping away over several years of curriculum support positions and infrastructure such as regularly scheduled time for teachers and leaders to meet.

During the summer of 2012, ELA and math coordinators, literacy specialists, coaches, and department heads were to convene curriculum teams to realign curriculum to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks by writing new teaching units. In science and social studies new lead facilitators and a curriculum committee are also being formed to explore updating the science and social studies curriculum. However, as one district leader noted, the district's emphasis has focused mainly on curriculum and not simultaneously on instruction and on how assessment can drive instruction. Additional evidence supported the claim that instruction and assessment have not been a priority topic for many shared conversations among leaders and teachers. For example, the review team was told that people held different views of what constitutes good instruction in the district and there had been no follow-up discussion to a recent video about good teaching shown to principals and others. In interviews, participants acknowledged that generally, there is an absence of time built into the school day to pursue these discussions on an ongoing basis. On many occasions in the elementary schools teachers meet to collaborate during personal planning time. For the Grade-Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs) in kindergarten through grade 5, which took place three times during the 2011–2012 school year for each grade level, the district hires substitutes to allow grade-level teachers to participate. At the middle schools, teachers do have scheduled team time to meet as well as individual planning time.

Situation at the Time of the Review

Overall, the district is making progress in defining a variety of assessments that use multiple assessment formats for most core subjects. There are examples of benchmark, summative, and formative assessments used to better understand student progress and achievement, to plan, and to group students for instruction and interventions. Yet, the review team found inconsistencies in

the frequency of implementation for some assessments and in the extent to which the balance for formative and summative assessments was well-tuned in all subjects, K–12. Given the complexity of teaching a balanced literacy model in kindergarten through grade 5, the MAP tests may not be a good match to decipher how well students are meeting goals embedded in Readers' Workshop and may not provide the most useful data to plan for instruction and interventions.

Also, there are no standardized writing rubrics linked to the various types of writing assignments for formats used in high school English classes. These can deter leaders, teachers, and students from understanding how well students have mastered and can apply the knowledge and skills promoted by curriculum standards and learning objectives connected to different forms of writing.

Interviewees attribute many of the assessment weaknesses to the eroding leadership in curriculum and instruction for almost a decade. Without leaders to provide direction and to closely monitor and model assessment practices and articulate the integral role that assessment plays in curriculum and instruction, the district has not yet built a finely developed assessment system, but it has made a start. The current positions of K–8 ELA and mathematics coordinators have begun to address assessment more systematically at their levels. In addition, the absence of a complete, aligned, and documented curriculum also contributes to the leeway teachers have in using a variety of assessment practices. The timing of curriculum renewal projects during the summer of 2012 to adjust to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks presents an opportunity to include appropriate assessments and assessment strategies in new curriculum units— units that eventually can be blended into a fully documented curriculum. With the intent to bring a new director of educational operations on board, the district will likely have the needed expertise to champion, develop, and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment in an integrated way.

The district's capacity and efforts to collect, disseminate, analyze, and use assessment data and other data to improve curriculum, instruction, and student achievement are evolving and progressing.

Aligning Goals and Building Technology Infrastructure

Under the current superintendent's leadership, the district has made a commitment to become more data rich and data driven and to upgrade technology infrastructure and human capacity to use technology well. The district has already put in place several staff members with expertise in developing and managing data-based systems and practices. This includes the part-time K-8 student data coordinator (funded by Title I) and the high school data and testing coordinator (funded by a reallocation of resources in the operating budget). A new districtwide technology director was to be in place in the summer of 2012. A multiyear effort to upgrade all aspects of technology in the district is supported by the town's commitment and investment of $2,000,000 over four years for hardware, software, and professional development. This has already begun with the purchase of laptops for elementary teachers and other instructional technology in the current fiscal year. In addition, data teams have now been formed at all schools. At the

elementary schools, data teams are composed of a teacher from each grade, the literacy specialist, the math coach (if there is one), a guidance counselor, and the principal. Team composition is similar across other schools. Leaders described the current status of data teams as "zygotes" and "infants" who need more training, experience, and time before they can be highly functioning. Some teams have had professional development with Research for Better Teaching and some with ESE. A three-day data team institute was held in August 2011 for elementary and middle-school data teams to review 2011 MCAS data in preparation for their work in the 2011–2012 school year.

Setting a Vision and Framework for Using Data Well

Data teams and participants in Grade-Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs, described below) work within the framework of two paradigms that support the use of data for continuous improvement. One is a multistep, data-driven inquiry and action cycle based on ESE's cycle of inquiry. It seeks to identify an issue, gather the information or data needed to understand and diagnose it, develop and implement action steps for improvement, evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation, and then reintroduce the inquiry cycle. The other is a shared vision statement for assessment developed by the elementary literacy specialist team and drawn from the conceptual framework of Research for Better Teaching's data universe triangle.[8] Leaders have attempted to communicate both paradigms through presentations across the district and at school committee meetings. These paradigms provide a scaffold for data teams and grade-level teacher groups convening in GLIMs to organize and apply lessons gleaned from the collection and analysis of multiple types of data to diagnose learning problems, identify interventions, improve instruction, and promote students' academic success.

The Evolving Work of Data Teams

Elementary-school data teams meet monthly to share analysis and collaborate with colleagues either during or after school or at staff meetings, depending on each school's schedule. Finding regular scheduled meeting times during the school day at the elementary schools is problematic because only one or two schools have common planning time built into their daily schedules. At the middle schools, data teams meet once during the school day every six-day cycle. The high-school data team has just been formed and has met a few times after school. There are constant issues about finding common time to meet in the district.

A district data team has also recently formed and has met twice. Its membership comes from across the district and represents those who collect and manage the district's data and those who are consumers of that data. The district data team has been working with a representative from ESE's District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) to define how it can better support and model the effective use of data to improve teaching and learning and also model a culture of inquiry. In a short period of time it has defined five key functions associated with its work: 1)

[8] See Data Universe Triangle by Dr. Nancy Love, Research for Better Teaching (RBT), 2008.

vision and policy management, 2) data management, 3) inquiry, analysis and action, 4) professional development, and 5) monitoring and communicating about progress.

Evidence from multiple interviews and documents indicates that data teams are making progress at the school level, especially in kindergarten through grade 5. All are still in the early stages of learning to use data well and there is considerable commitment to the process. Principals offered observations ranging from "we're still fumbling our way through" to "there is a lack of resistance to this among teachers; it's a priority for them," to "the teachers need to understand why we're doing what we're doing— they run with it once they understand it." Data is used for Tier I and Tier II interventions to define small groups for instruction and for Grade Level Intervention Meetings to diagnose grade-level learning problems to address.

Other leaders as well as teachers described a need to strengthen teachers' capacity to use data more effectively. One middle-school leader noted that, for the most part, teachers in grades 6–8 were not looking at data on their own and added that although professional development to analyze data had been offered, it had not been required. This was echoed by teachers in a focus group. For the most part, teachers are learning to analyze data by doing it in grade-level meetings and data-team meetings. Evidence provided by the list of professional development offerings and from interviews indicated that teachers could participate in a half-day session to learn to analyze MCAS data and could join professional development study groups to learn to analyze and use data if they chose to. Some data analysis takes place in high-school department meetings, as noted earlier. For example, the high- school world language department analyzed mid-term exam data as a group during a professional development day during the winter of 2011.

Each school has used its data team differently, but all schools have followed similar procedures to identify a learning problem to address using MCAS data, MAP data, MEPA data, common assessment data, and other indicators. The team's goal is to use the data to diagnose and understand root causes for the learning problem(s) and develop action plans or intervention strategies to address the problem(s). Examples of several learning problems uncovered by individual schools include weak vocabulary, the need to close the achievement gap among subgroups, and developing a constructive response to literature. As described above, the teams are just learning to do this work under the guidance of coordinators, coaches, and specialists.

Grade-Level Intervention Meetings

Grade-Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs) were piloted in several elementary schools in the 2010–2011 school year and are being implemented in all elementary schools in 2011–2012. Their development was supported by an MTSS grant received by the district. Their purpose is to take a "global and purposeful" look at each school's grade-level data and identify interventions to benefit the most students at that grade level. GLIMs use the "stoplight-highlight" protocol to determine the level of need reflected by data from each grade such as performance data on MCAS or MAP tests, progress/growth data (median Student Growth Percentiles), and comparisons of Framingham's data to data about comparable communities identified in ESE's District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) or to the state overall. In the documents prepared for

GLIMs, data highlighted in red helps participants know to stop and pay close attention to it; data highlighted in yellow alerts participants to use caution and consider it carefully; and data highlighted in green indicates that the data is satisfactory but still deserves consideration. GLIMs take place two to three times a year and are attended by multiple stakeholders whose work interfaces with students and teachers at that grade level. Attendees can be classroom teachers, the guidance counselor, a literacy specialist, a mathematics coach, interventionists, ESL teachers, and special education teachers. According to interviewees, GLIMs have engaged teachers and other participants who now have a shared understanding of grade-level strengths and weaknesses. The protocol has provided a user-friendly way to collaboratively look at student data, understand trends, discuss their implications, and develop interventions for improvement. By coming away from GLIMs with a plan or intervention to implement over several months to address the learning problem(s), teachers have been able to focus on mutually agreed-upon goals for their grade level. At the next GLIMs, several months later, the groups revisit the most recent data and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and plan for next steps.

As described earlier, in the district's setting of the vision and context for using data, interviewees indicated that in GLIMs and in data team meetings the district has made some progress working with data situated at the "top" of the data triangle graphic. For example, teachers are comfortable using and understanding summative assessments such as MCAS and MAP tests or demographic data. Conversely, the data located in the lower segments of the data triangle, which are broader and intended for more frequent classroom use, are not as frequently tracked and recorded and therefore are harder for teachers to access and explore at this time. Examples of this type of data include formative classroom assessments for learning such as student work, writing samples, student journals, and student self-assessments. Leaders have identified this type of data as needing more attention and refined analysis across all schools.

A Robust Student Information System

According to interviewees, another component of a data-driven system can benefit from further development. The capacity and use of the district's X2 Aspen Portal needs to be expanded across all schools to create a more viable and robust student information system that is easily accessible to all stakeholders—leaders, teachers, counselors, students, parents, and appropriate others. Currently, according to interviewees, many cannot easily access student achievement data and other data in a timely way and it has been difficult to enter a lot of data into the system because of the incompatibility of formats. Currently, student data is maintained in different formats and spreadsheets and the district has not had a person with the expertise to consolidate it in one platform to make it accessible and easy to manipulate. In addition, training in ESE's Education Data Warehouse has proved "overwhelming" for some who have participated. Several interviewees hoped that the new technology director would address this need.

In summary, the district has prioritized the collection, dissemination, and use of assessment data and other data to inform and drive decisions to improve both teaching and learning. This is evident in the work of the recently formed data teams, the GLIMs, and in department meetings at the high school in mathematics, science, and world language. It has secured the commitment of

resources from the community to update its technology infrastructure over the next several years. This will mean the allocation of meaningful funding for the purchase of hardware, software, instructional technology, and professional development. It has hired a permanent replacement for the position of technology director for the 2012–2013 school year and has hired part-time staff, partly funded by grants, to collaborate with teachers on data analysis and to develop systems and practices that will enable teachers to use data well in both kindergarten through grade 8 and in grades 9–12. However, the nature of how these positions will be funded in the future is still an open question. And as teachers' work with data at each school and within each discipline becomes more sophisticated and expanded over time, the district should consider whether two part-time staff members will be sufficient to meet the complex nature of the work, given the size of the district.

In addition, many recognize the absence of regularly scheduled time during the school day for professional collaboration to build even more capacity to realize the district's vision of becoming more data driven. Currently, the district's efforts toward this goal are nascent in many instances. Without a more soundly developed and operational infrastructure, without more professional development for teachers and the development of stronger capacity to use student data, not only in small groups but also as individuals, and without the needed time during the school day to conduct professional conversations regularly at all schools, it will be challenging for the district to attain the data-rich and data-driven culture to which it aspires and which both adults and children deserve.

Human Resources and Professional Development

A review of a random sample of district personnel records indicated that there was a wide variation in the quality of the recommendations provided to support improvement of instructional quality and professional growth, and that teachers were evaluated too infrequently, as noted in a 2005 review of the school district. Framingham educators met regularly and productively during the 2011–2012 school year to align the district's evaluation system with the new state evaluation system.

Quality of Teacher Evaluations

Review team members examined the performance evaluations of 50 faculty members randomly selected from across the district. Additionally, a total of 27 administrator evaluations, which included those of all school principals, assistant principals, and central office administrators, were also examined. Reviewers found the overall quality of faculty evaluations to be generally good. They were descriptive and informative with substantial supporting factual and pedagogical details appropriately cited. They were also instructive and typically included recommendations as well as commendations pertinent to the lesson observed. The quality of these evaluative comments varied widely, however. Some were quite thoughtful and insightful, containing specific feedback that was clearly targeted to improve classroom practices, expand instructional competencies, and contribute to overall professional growth. Others were superficial or

perfunctory, containing recommendations such as "Continue to do wonderful work," "Pursue professional development in areas of interest and need," and "Thank you for your hard work," and provided little of meaningful value in promoting improved pedagogical practice.

Timeliness of Educator Evaluations

Of particular concern to the review team was the issue of timeliness of evaluations for both teachers and administrators. Although this problem was identified in the 2005 EQA Report on the Framingham Public Schools[9], reviewers noted that the district still does not produce evaluations when required. According to state law (G.L. c. 71, s. 38), all administrators and teachers without professional status are to be evaluated annually and teachers with professional status at least once every two years. The review team found, however, that one quarter of all Framingham teachers scheduled to be evaluated over the three school years preceding the review had not been evaluated. A more detailed analysis of district records revealed that while approximately 10 percent of teachers without professional status did not receive their annual evaluations, over 40 percent of teachers with professional status had not been evaluated during this same period. In addition, according to an addendum to the teachers' collective bargaining agreement, "Framingham Public Schools Supervision and Evaluation Procedures," all teacher evaluations are limited to formal "classroom observations" with no provisions for summary evaluation at the conclusion of an evaluation cycle. Teachers without professional status are to receive two such formative evaluations each year until they attain professional teacher status. Once granted professional status, teachers are subject to a single classroom observation only "once every three years."

The district also has not provided annual written evaluations for principals and central office administrators. Despite state law, as well as the policies of the district itself that require annual performance evaluations of administrators, reviewers were told that such documents have been completed only once (in 2010–2011) in the seven years since the EQA review. Review team members found those evaluations only somewhat descriptive and instructive and provided little specific information that could contribute to meaningful improvement in administrators' professional competencies. In interviews, district administrators confirmed that the superintendent did not provide them with annual written evaluations, expressing dismay at the continuing absence of relevant formal feedback and the missed opportunity to contribute to their professional growth. They also acknowledged that they themselves have not been held accountable for the timely completion of scheduled staff evaluations or for submitting them to the human resources office when they were due.

Variations in Supervisory Practices

Reviewers also were told of wide variations in the quality of supervisory practices that exist across the district. In focus-group interviews, teachers reported that in some schools principals and other school administrators frequently visited classrooms and demonstrated instructional

[9] The 2005 EQA Report on the Framingham Public Schools can be found at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/accountability/dr/reports.html?district=F-J; see pp. 52–56.

leadership by providing them with useful and timely feedback about pedagogy. In other schools, though, teachers indicated that they seldom saw school administrators except for contractually required, formal, class-period observations/evaluations. District records also showed wide discrepancies among individual school principals with respect to completing and submitting teacher evaluations to the central office when required. While some principals conducted scheduled evaluations in a timely manner, others were much less consistent.

Efforts to Align the Educator Evaluation System with the New Evaluation Model

Reviewers were told that a 14-member committee composed of Framingham teachers and administrators had been meeting regularly—and according to interviewees productively—during the 2011–2012 school year in an effort to revise the district's current evaluation system so that it will be aligned with new state requirements.

Conclusion

The state expects that every public school district in the Commonwealth will use a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation system for both teachers and administrators that is consistent with the principles, procedures, and requirements contained within state regulations. The overarching goal of this process is to systematically enhance the professional skills of teachers and administrators to better enable them to assist all students to perform at a high academic level. Framingham's has continued not to meet the staff evaluation requirements of the state and of the district itself; this fundamentally undermines its attempts to successfully implement needed school-level and systemwide improvement strategies and initiatives. In addition, progress toward achieving specific objectives to benefit student academic performance as well as targeted efforts to enhance the professional growth, competencies, and the overall effectiveness of teachers and administrators is greatly compromised. In the review team's judgment, at the time of the review the district's supervision and evaluation policies and practices did not have the capacity to adequately monitor, assess, and improve teaching and learning within every school or to effectively promote strategic objectives. Consequently, the district's evaluation system was unable to adequately serve the comprehensive needs of teachers, administrators, and ultimately of students or to advance the major educational goals of the Framingham Public Schools. As it implements a new evaluation system in accordance with the ESE educator evaluation model, the district has an opportunity now to make evaluation a more informative, reflective, and instructive process and to improve instruction at all levels.

Although Framingham's professional development program provides opportunities for teacher input and offers faculty a range of options to expand their content knowledge and professional skills, it does not have a clear leadership structure and programming is overly broad in scope and only loosely aligned with district goals.

Positive Elements of the Professional Development Program

The review team identified a number of positive elements within the district's professional development (PD) program. For example, teachers are provided with formal opportunities to be

involved in both the development and evaluation of PD offerings and activities. The Framingham Teachers' Association (FTA) collective bargaining agreement (Article 35) states that "All possible use will be made of the talents and services of the professional staff in the in-service program." Interviews with teachers and administrators confirmed that the district makes a concerted effort to do so. Relevant documents, including districtwide and school-level PD agendas, summer workshop schedules and the like, clearly show that the skills and expertise of district and school leaders, specialists, department heads, and classroom teachers are routinely used in the development and presentation of PD programs. In addition, the teachers' collective bargaining agreement also stipulates (Article 38) that the "Teachers Association will appoint an Instructional and Professional Development Committee which will consider the future development of curriculum, teaching methods, aids, teaching materials, and educational facilities intended to improve educational programming in the Framingham Schools." The teachers' collective bargaining agreement further specifies that "this committee will cooperate with administrators in the implementation of educational revisions" and will "advise the superintendent of schools on the planning of the in-service program and this committee will encourage participation by the professional staff in the in-service program." It is evident that the district is committed to providing the professional staff with opportunities to be actively involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of PD programming.

Framingham's 2011–2012 PD calendar provided teachers with a total of three early release days, which were primarily school based and directed, and one full day PD session, which was largely districtwide in scope. Offerings were widely differentiated and included a very broad range of topics, activities, and interests. Teachers were subsequently encouraged to submit electronic evaluation forms for each workshop attended at the conclusion of every professional development session.

According to Framingham's comprehensive and informative PD website, the goal of professional development is to "enable staff to meet re-licensure requirements and to maintain and advance current knowledge in the field." The district provides staff with a variety of options for doing so. In addition to the regularly scheduled in-service released time offerings, the district also sponsors many low-cost graduate courses, which may be taken for college credit, Framingham salary credit, or Professional Development Points (PDPs). Staff can also earn PDPs for participation in special workshops, committees, or study groups that are periodically formed to address specific program needs within the district, as well as through some school-based, job-embedded opportunities such as the ongoing K–8 Grade Level Intervention Meetings. During the school year, staff can securely access their PD records online from the district's PD website. These records summarize the courses/workshops provided by the Framingham Public Schools (FPS) that they have completed, current accrued PDPs/credits, and registration confirmations for future workshops and courses.

Concerns about the Professional Development Program

In addition to the positive characteristics described, however, review team members also were told of a number of significant problems and concerns that appear to be having a negative impact

on the effectiveness of the district's PD programming. First among these is an absence of a clear leadership structure. Although the FPS Organizational Chart (Policy CCA) indicates that the responsibility for staff development is primarily the superintendent's, interviewees reported that it had essentially been delegated to the assistant superintendent and was partially shared by school principals. District and school leaders explained that there is no formal, centralized structure, individual, or permanent standing committee whose designated role or responsibility is to oversee or direct the district's PD program. Interviewees explained that the leadership structure appeared to be continually "evolving" and that at present an *ad hoc* committee called the Curriculum and Instruction Team had assumed nominal control of PD programming. Although this committee is chaired by the interim assistant superintendent, its composition, role, and responsibilities were unclear to many of those teachers and administrators interviewed. Further compounding this matter was what was described as an awkward PD interface between teachers and district leaders. For example, according to the teachers' collective bargaining agreement (Article 35), "a committee consisting of the association's Instructional and Professional Development Committee and the director of educational operations, director of curriculum/staff development, and director of pupil personnel services will be formed to advise the superintendent on the planning of in-service programs." No such committee currently exists, however, and the actual role of the FTA in the district's PD process is ill defined. There was not a clear and consistent answer from interviewees to reviewers' question as to who is in charge of the PD program in the Framingham Public Schools.

A second area of concern is the overly broad scope of PD offerings and their very loose alignment with key district goals and initiatives. The FPS Professional Development Vision Statement identifies seven major PD "strands": a) curriculum development, implementation and understanding, b) instructional best practices including assessment and accountability, c) diverse learning and development needs of all students, d) strategies for creating and maintaining an environment for student learning, e) school and district initiatives and goals as well as state and federal mandates, f) leadership coaching and supervision (for administrators and other leaders), and g) induction for teachers without professional status and new administrators. In addition to this, district leaders indicated that curriculum alignment with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, ESL training, and data collection and analysis methodologies are also areas targeted for staff PD.

Based on a review of the district's PD programming for 2011–2012, it appears that breadth rather than depth has prevailed. In an effort to offer programs and workshops that simultaneously address virtually every identified objective, the district was ultimately able to effectively respond to very few. In interviews, both teachers and administrators expressed concern that the district's PD programming is much too broad and does not have what one administrator called a "laser beam" focus and a direct link to a more manageable number of specific and well-defined district initiatives. They described the PD program as uncoordinated, decentralized, and seemingly without a long-term, sustained commitment to carefully prioritized goals. By attempting to do too much, the district has actually accomplished too little. Consequently, it was unable to

concentrate the time, attention, and human and financial resources required for new programs or practices to become embedded within the district.

The review team believes that despite several positive elements and good faith efforts of many teachers and administrators, Framingham's professional development program falls short of the mission articulated in its PD Vision Statement, "To ensure that each staff member has the skills and knowledge necessary to serve our diverse learners and assist in the student's achievement and learning." The district's professional development program does not have well-defined central leadership, a clear focus, and systematic alignment with district priorities, and it attempts to do too much, thus overextending its limited resources. Its overly broad scope results in a disconnected rather than unified system of programs, services, and activities. Consequently, Framingham's PD program is unable to sufficiently inform, develop, or improve the competencies of the district's educators as a means to assist all learners and advance academic achievement for every student.

Student Support

The district has a strong gifted and talented program also known as Sage that currently serves all elementary and middle schools and has been in the district for over 30 years.

Framingham has a unique and robust gifted and talented program that has been in the district since 1980. The program's four teachers and one department head split their time among the eight elementary schools and three middle schools and provide both pull-out and push-in programs and activities. Although the program has experienced staff reductions over the years, it continues to provide an array of interventions to students as well as professional development to teachers.

Elementary Program

Students in grades 3–5 are eligible for Sage pull-out services. Parents or teachers may refer students. According to documents posted on the Framingham website, "Sage pullout services are not designed to simply accelerate bright children who are capable of quick-paced learning (achievement). Its goal is to focus in on differentiation that provides the alterations or modifications necessary to address learning styles that then can result in positive learning outcomes." Once students are screened and selected for the program, they meet with the Sage teacher assigned to that school for approximately two hours each week in a small-group setting. Groups work on projects that include independent investigations, 12 Thinking Skill Behaviors, and 10 Self-Help Skills. The Sage staff also serves as a resource for classroom teachers, providing materials, lessons, and learning centers options for differentiated instruction.

Middle-School Program

Middle-school students also benefit from Sage. While it is not a separate pull-out program at the middle schools, sessions on leadership, research skills, and organizational skill are conducted during lunch time. Sage teachers in the middle school also support embedded professional

development for classroom teachers. Topics vary and include incorporating higher-order thinking skills in lessons, developing alternative assessments, forming flexible groups, and designing tiered instruction. Additionally, Sage provides every middle-school teacher with a differentiated instruction toolkit and resource book.

The gifted and talented program also provides vocabulary development resources for all students in grade 3–8. Words are posted on the website and hard-copy lists are made available for families to use as they work with their children. Students are encouraged to participate in Word Masters Challenge, a national vocabulary competition. Sage staff also conducts a math league for mathematics competition for students in grades 4–5.

The gifted and talented program provides all elementary and middle schools with opportunities for students and teachers to benefit from added support and extensions of academic services. Reviewers also were told that Sage staff members provide professional development for teachers in the bilingual program and in the special education program. Sage is also well regarded by parents. Parent said during a focus group that Sage students often leave the Framingham Public Schools after grade 5 and go elsewhere (charter or private), then come back for high school when students can enroll in AP classes. This was explained as a response to the absence of pull-out services in the middle schools.

Sage staff members offer unique and useful services to the Framingham Public Schools. They provide opportunities not only for a select group of students, but also for staff, who can potentially reach more than the limited number of students identified for pull-out services. Their work has undoubtedly enhanced student achievement in the district and helped teachers develop alternative teaching strategies, and should be recognized as a valuable asset.

The district has many programs, services, and practices to support students, but insufficient data-driven targeted assistance in ELA and mathematics for struggling students.

The Framingham Public Schools have an array of programs, services, and practices to support students' learning needs, but targeted assistance for specific students who have consistently performed below proficiency on MCAS tests is limited. Many of those students are in the three high-needs subgroups of English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and students from low-income families.

Performance of High-Needs Subgroups from 2007-2011

In 2010 and 2011, a higher proportion of Framingham's ELLs made progress on the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) than peers statewide, 65 percent compared with 60 percent in 2010, 63 percent compared with 58 percent in 2011.

From 2007 to 2011 English language learners (ELLs) in Framingham had higher MCAS proficiency rates than ELLs statewide in both ELA and math, except for 2009 when the math proficiency rates of the two subgroups were the same. In both subjects the differences between

the proficiency rates of the district and state ELLs were smaller in 2009, 2010, and 2011 than in 2007 and 2008. See Table 4 below.

Over this same period proficiency rates for Framingham students with disabilities were no more than one or two points different from proficiency rates for students with disabilities statewide. In 2011 the district and state subgroups had the same proficiency rates in both subjects, both having risen two or three points from 2007. See Table 4 below.

Proficiency rates for students from low-income families were only one or two points different in 2011 from what they were in 2007; in ELA and math, because of rising proficiency rates in the statewide low-income subgroup, Framingham low-income students ended up in 2011 with proficiency rates that were respectively 5 and 6 points below the state rates, whereas in 2007 Framingham low-income students' proficiency rate was the same as the state subgroup's in ELA and 3 points above it in math. See Table 4 below.

Table 4: Framingham Public Schools and State Percentages of ELLs, Students with Disabilities, and Students from Low-Income Families Scoring Proficient or Higher in ELA and Mathematics 2007—2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
English Language Learners					
Framingham ELA	24	25	21	27	29
State ELA	17	16	19	22	23
Framingham Mathematics	25	29	21	26	27
State Mathematics	20	21	21	24	25
Students with Disabilities					
Framingham ELA	27	27	27	28	30
State ELA	28	26	28	28	30
Framingham Mathematics	20	21	22	23	22
State Mathematics	19	19	20	21	22
Students from Low-Income Families					
Framingham ELA	42	42	43	44	44
State ELA	42	42	45	47	49
Framingham Mathematics	33	35	32	34	32
State Mathematics	30	33	33	37	38
Source: District Analysis and Review Tool on ESE website					

Median SGPs for these three district subgroups were all in the moderate range (40.0 to 59.9) from 2008, when SGPs were first calculated, to 2011, except for the median SGPs for students with disabilities in 2008 and 2010 in ELA, which were 38.0 and 39.0, just below the moderate range.

In each of the years from 2007 to 2011, with one exception, the district's graduation rate for all three of these subgroups exceeded the corresponding state subgroup's graduation rate, often substantially. See Table 5 below.

Table 5: Framingham Public Schools and State
Four-Year Graduation Rate for ELLs, Students with Disabilities, and Students from Low-Income Families
2007–2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Framingham ELLs	68.9	65.2	62.4	71.1	59.4
State ELLs	53.3	55.8	57.5	57.8	56.2
Framingham Students with Disabilities	78.4	76.6	65.1	73.5	59.6
State Students with Disabilities	62.8	64.1	64.9	64.0	65.6
Framingham Low-Income	85.7	79.3	72.4	74.5	72.7
State Low-Income	65.2	64.8	66.9	67.9	69.8
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website					

The performance of these district subgroups, then, presents a mixed picture. Although their graduation rates have exceeded the state subgroups', the graduation rates for students with disabilities and low-income students exceeded the state subgroups' rates by less of a margin in the years after 2008. Although district proficiency for ELLs has exceeded the state's, the amount by which proficiency rates for ELLs exceed state ELLs' rates has also been smaller in recent years. After 2008 the proficiency rates of low-income students fell below the state subgroup's rates. And of course, when looked at in absolute terms, there is much room for improvement on these measures in the performance of each of these subgroups, as in the performance of district (and state) students overall (see first Student Achievement finding above).

Education of ELLs

Framingham has a significant student population of English language learners (ELLs). ELL enrollment was 1,109 students or 13.6 percent in 2011-2012, compared to 7.3 percent statewide (it was 1,361 students or 16.6 percent in 2010-2011, compared to 7.1 percent statewide). The district provides three different programs for ELLs. All program models consist of two prongs: content instruction and English language development. The second prong of all models provides ELLs with direct instruction in English language development by a certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher.

- Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) as a model provides content instruction in an English-only environment taught by licensed teachers who have been trained through category training to differentiate for ELLs or who hold dual license in the content and ESL. As described above, all students are also provided with ESL. The SEI model provides language instruction for 49 percent of ELLs in Framingham.

- Twenty-four percent of ELLs are enrolled in the Two-Way Bilingual Education (TWBE) program. This model groups English-dominant students with Spanish-dominant ELLs in a balanced classroom environment. All students in this model (ELL and English-dominant) study the content curricula in English and Spanish, taught by certified content teachers who are bilingual. ELLs also receive direct instruction in ESL from a certified ESL teacher.
- Another twenty-four percent of ELLs are in the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs. Eligible students for this model speak either Spanish or Portuguese and have pre-existing literacy skills in the native language. Students continue to study content in the native language with certified bilingual teachers to minimize loss of content development while concurrently studying ESL. As their English develops, instruction shifts to greater amounts in English only and transfers content knowledge to English.
- The remaining 3 percent opt out of any ELL program by parent preference.

The Barbieri School houses the kindergarten to grade 5 TWBE model. Brophy, Wilson, and Potter Road each house TBE models. Brophy enrolls the Spanish-speaking TBE students and Potter Road and Woodrow Wilson each enroll Portuguese-speaking ELLs. All program model schools, other than Barbieri, offer SEI. Although SEI is at each of the following K-5 schools; Brophy, Dunning, Potter Road, and Woodrow Wilson: the design and implementation vary. Dunning offers a mixed language co-taught model, Brophy offers a fully integrated SEI model, and Woodrow Wilson offers SEI in language specific groupings of ELLs. In each SEI program model all instruction is in English and is provided by a teacher trained to differentiate for ELLs.

In the 2011–2012 school year, according to ESE's District Analysis and Review Tool for English Language Learners (DART for ELLs)[10], 79.5 percent of the district's ELLs (882 out of 1,109) were enrolled in kindergarten through grade 5. According to district data, 20.3 percent of those K-5 ELLs were at a beginning level of English proficiency. The three elementary schools identified as Level 3 by ESE's accountability system had the highest concentrations of ELLs: Wilson Elementary with 239 students or 46.2 percent of all students; Barbieri Elementary, 230 students or 40.5 percent of all students; and Brophy Elementary, 186 students or 39.1 percent of all students.[11] Seventy-one percent of ELLs in Framingham are from low-income families.[12] The three Level 3 elementary schools also had the highest percentages of low-income students: Wilson Elementary, 69.8 percent; Brophy Elementary, 60.5 percent; and Barbieri Elementary, 59.5 percent.

As noted above, the education of ELLs is slightly different in each elementary school and changes are continuing to happen. The SEI model at the Brophy school changed in the 2011-2012 year; ELLs at Brophy had previously been grouped in all ELL, language-specific

[10] Available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html (see School Overview tab). Except as noted, all data in this paragraph is from the DART for ELLs and is for 2011-2012.
[11] The Potter Road and Dunning elementary schools, which were identified at Level 1 and Level 2 in 2010-2011, also have ELL programs; their percentages of ELL students were 23.6 percent and 16. 2 percent in 2011-2012.
[12] See DART for ELLs (link in footnote 10 above), Annual Snapshot tab.

environments for grade level content instruction. In 2011-2012, ELLs were integrated with English-dominant peers across the entire school.

While the district should be recognized for its efforts to improve student achievement by re-organizing ELL programs with the goal of improving services to students, there is no common overall vision for ELLs programmatically that is known and understood by leaders throughout the district: principals noted that there is a need for a district improvement goal for English language learners so everyone can focus their efforts on improving achievement for ELLs. Programs, strategies, and practices have the greatest opportunity for success when all stakeholders are involved in and understand both the vision and the process for change.

Special Education

Framingham offers a comprehensive array of services for students with disabilities. Program offerings range from inclusion to substantially separate classrooms and serve students from as young as 3 to age 22. The following services are available in all schools: resource room/in-class support, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physical therapy, teacher of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility, adaptive physical education, and audiology consultation. Four elementary schools have co-taught strands. Separate and sub-separate classes are spread among seven of the eight elementary schools and housed in each of the three middle schools. Sub-separate programs (the Phoenix Program and the Learning Center Program) are also housed within the high school.

The former assistant superintendent presented a Report on Special Education in Framingham in March 2010. This report provided an overview of the wide array of offerings in the district and compared Framingham's special education expenditures with those of other surrounding towns and comparable cities. Included in the summary of data collected for the report is the statement, "Special education students do not achieve at the same level as non-identified students as measured by MCAS. Special education students comprise a larger percentage in the lowest growth quintile compared to non-identified Framingham students." The report suggested as the highest priority action item for Framingham to implement a three-tier model for reading instruction, also called a Response to Intervention (RtI) model, in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The report recommended:

- Use a high quality screening tool, such as Measures of Academic Progress, to identify students who are reading more than one year below grade level.
- Provide "core plus more" in the form of at least 30 additional minutes of instruction daily to struggling students.
- Track the progress and growth of all students to ensure at least one year's growth in reading each year, adjusting instruction as needed.
- Assign the responsibility of successful implementation of RtI to each building principal and provide appropriate resources to them.

The 2010 report and MCAS data from 2011 both point to the need to develop a data-based protocol for instructional intervention so that student achievement can be improved for all students at risk, especially students with disabilities. Interviewees reported that special education teachers are now beginning to look at MAP results and disaggregating MCAS data to address the diverse learning needs of at-risk students.

Support in the Elementary Schools

The district recently convened Grade Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs) to identify and provide targeted services to students who are struggling in reading, mathematics, or with behavioral issues. GLIMs were an outgrowth of a $20,000 state grant for Tiered Support. GLIMs are held three times per year and are facilitated by the Title I director for the Title I schools and the student data coordinator for the non-Title I schools. The purpose of the GLIMs is to look at data for a grade level in a school and identify the interventions that would benefit the greatest number of students at that grade level. Students are grouped in color-coded categories of red, yellow, and green. Students in the red and yellow categories are grouped for additional instructional support. Teachers and interventionists plan how to meet the needs of students in the red and yellow categories at their grade level. The intervention plan is followed for several months, then the group reconvenes to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and determine next steps.

Students are provided different intervention services at different schools. In Title I schools students are pulled out during literacy. In other schools, teachers may work with small groups during social studies, and another teacher works on strategies during center-based learning activities. For mathematics interventions, students are mixed in flexible groupings so all "reds" are not always together and can benefit from the modeling provided by higher-performing students.

While GLIMs may make a positive impact on students who are struggling, interventions are selected and implemented primarily in response to data patterns at grade level. In meetings, teachers and leaders are checking the effectiveness of an intervention as a means for accountability rather than examining the improved achievement of individual students.

Support in the Middle Schools

The Literacy Action Team, composed of literacy specialists from across the district, developed a Literacy Action Plan in 2010 that provided a road map for planning literacy interventions for middle-school students. A task force was formed and looked at RtI models to respond to struggling readers, particularly students with disabilities and ELLs. Literacy labs were formed at all three middle schools as a means to teach literacy in an RtI setting. Literacy labs have just begun in the 2011–2012 school year. Department heads confirmed that everyone participates: teachers across all content areas, guidance, physical education, and paraprofessionals. Each grade has a different focus. Grade 6 is focused on grammar, grade 7 on compare and contrast, and grade 8 on persuasive argument. The goal of this RtI model is for students to make one year's growth as reflected on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. Middle-

school leaders were to assess the effectiveness of literacy labs at the end of the 2011–2012 school year.

Reviewers were told by department heads that while literacy labs may be a step in the right direction for literacy by providing more time for students to focus on specific literacy skills in a small group setting, they have come at a cost of instructional time taken away from other content areas, including mathematics, where most middle-school students in 2011 were not yet proficient.[13] Leaders have heard and responded to this conundrum by recommending that certain components of the literacy labs be reduced from three trimesters to two and adding one trimester of mathematics.

In addition to the literacy labs, which are in the early stages of development, there is little else that provides targeted support for middle-school students based on achievement or other data. Two of the three middle schools are part of the 21st Century Afterschool Program. It serves 60 to 100 students four days a week. There are enrichment clubs, mathematics club and theater, jazz band, and newspaper. The teachers' collective bargaining agreement requires that teachers stay 30 minutes after school for help, and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, teachers provide academic support. One middle school uses peer tutors (grade 8 students) for mathematics. Another has a Resiliency Program that provides some academic support. All of these are good efforts that could be strengthened by a tighter focus on identifying, targeting, and monitoring participating students.

Support at the High School

There is a range of programs to support high-school students at risk of failing or dropping out of school and students with disabilities. Thayer Academy is an alternative high school program housed in a separate facility and led by a coordinator. It is the primary dropout prevention program of the high school. At the time of the review 68 students were enrolled. Students receive instruction in five major subject areas and have small, flexible classes with shortened periods. The schedule is modified to accommodate students' school and work needs. Most students at Thayer Academy are older. Leaders expected 21 of the 32 seniors to graduate in the 2011–2012 school year. The referral process is informal. Interviewees said that they are working to develop a better defined focus and profile for admission. This was confirmed in an evaluation conducted for Thayer Academy in 2010 by the Walker Partnerships. Among the comprehensive list of commendations, findings, and recommendations is a recommendation to create an Intake Review Team. This team would make acceptance decisions based partly on student profiles that include data from transcripts, progress reports, and incident reports.

The Phoenix Program is a high-school program for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. All students are case managed. At the time of the review the program was serving 34 students with a staff of 9 that includes a director, 4 teachers, 2 social workers, and 2 behavioral

[13] In 2011, according to ESE data, 47 percent of grade 6 students scored proficient or higher in math, 45 percent of grade 7 students scored proficient or higher, and 51 percent of grade 8 students scored proficient or higher.

specialists. Students are enrolled based on their Individualized Education Programs. Another sub-separate program at the high school is the Learning Center, a program for students with complicated autism spectrum disorders.

Other offerings in the high school include some summer and after-school opportunities through the 21st Century Grant. It provides special activities and some academic support. High-school teachers are required to be available 10 minutes before and 15 minutes after school; it was reported that students may use that time for academic help. Parents and students confirmed that teachers are always available after school for help. Tutoring is provided for students who had failing MCAS scores and peer tutoring is available through the Academic Development Center. Additionally, fee-based summer school, mentoring, and work study are available to high-school students.

School Evaluation Teams

Framingham is beginning to use data to inform instruction and improve student achievement. Grade Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs) and follow-up and small-group interventions are promising. Reviewers also were told about School Evaluation Teams (SETs). SETs follow a four-step process that allows teachers to consult with colleagues about students who are presenting challenges in the classroom. Although it was reported that this process is not uniformly implemented across the district, SETs provide another forum to identify, target, and monitor student interventions. SET meetings include guidance counselors, social workers, teachers, specialists, and often the principal. SETs are also used as a precursor to special education referrals.

Conclusion

In summary, Framingham has a range of supports available to students performing below proficiency. Some programs such as the GLIMs are just beginning, others such as the 21st Century Afterschool Program are grant dependent and will eventually be phased out, still others like the special education and English language learner education programs are part of ongoing compulsory programming. Middle- and high-school teachers are available after school contractually and provide support to students. All of these are good efforts and provide much needed services for students from low-income families, ELLs, and students with disabilities—all of whom represent high-needs populations. However, there is limited data-driven programming targeting the specific learning needs of student subgroups. Without a more prescriptive approach, struggling students are more likely to fall between the cracks and continue to perform below proficiency.

Financial and Asset Management

The district has established a good working relationship with the town based on mutual trust and respect, as a result of the district's efforts to provide clarity of purpose, appropriate supporting data, and open lines of communication about its finances.

In 2009, the new superintendent hired a business administration director and charged him with building an improved working relationship with the town. Through their efforts over the past three years, the district has established a good working relationship with the town side of government and its leaders. This relationship is based on mutual trust and respect that has been built by the efforts of district leaders to work collaboratively with the town in an open and transparent manner. Town officials report that this was not always the case. The superintendent noted that in his first year (school year 2010), he found himself in the midst of an "angry budget process," in which he felt he was fighting for the district. Town officials cited the cooperative and collaborative efforts of the district leaders as contributing greatly to how readily the district's budgets are now passed on the Town Meeting floor. At the 2012 spring Town Meeting, representatives approved a fiscal year 2013 budget that was a 5.1 percentage increase over fiscal year 2012. The superintendent said that he works with the town "honest and early." Examples of open and transparent reports that the district provides to town officials that clarify the district's fiscal affairs and support its budget requests are many and include the Annual Town Meeting Budget Book and Presentation; Five-Year Capital Projections for fiscal years 2013-2017; and a fiscal year 2013 Requested Staff Summary charting the connection of staffing requests to school committee goals, SIP goals, and Race to the Top initiatives.

Other factors that town and district officials perceive as contributing to building the strong relationship include having a representative of the town's finance committee present and participating in the school budget development process with the finance subcommittee. Informal bi-weekly meetings for a couple of hours of the superintendent and business administration director, the town manager, and the chief financial officer (CFO) for the town increase awareness on the part of both the district and the town of their respective needs and the projected level of support the district may anticipate. School committee members meet with town committees to ensure that there will be "no surprises" at Town Meeting.

Town and district officials each suggest that some of the outcomes they believe were facilitated by the improved working relationship include: $2,000,000 of technology acquisition funding from Capital Improvement, a transition from operating district-owned school buses to contracting out for transportation services, the adoption of a new Munis software system scheduled for September 2012, the superintendent's efforts working with the town towards realizing a health insurance plan with an 80 percent–20 percent cost-sharing component, and the addition of a supplemental $1,000,000 in the special education out-of-district tuition line item to address the structural deficit in that account.

It has been through diligence on the part of the school committee and the district to create an open and collaborative approach to district finances that the district has been able to consistently gather community support for additions to the operating budget.

The district has a sound set of financial processes and operating procedures in place.

Financial Systems and Procedures

The district has a sound set of financial processes and operating procedures in place that are consistently followed throughout the district. During the site visit, review team members examined the district's accounts payable warrants, grant warrants, expenditure reports, and budget reports to the school committee and found all reflected sound business practices.

In fiscal year 2010, the district's payroll functions transitioned from the district to the town. A review of this function similarly reflected sound business practice. The town creates and audits the district's revolving accounts on a regular basis. The town regularly contracts with the firm of Melanson and Heath to conduct its outside audits including for the school district. The 2011 audit did not report any audit exceptions for the district. Town officials attribute this to the close working relationship that the district has developed with the town.

The district and the town track their financial affairs using Munis software. Both town and district officials report that the version currently in use is an older and more limited version that does not have the capacity to effectively project payroll and enrollment, but a new Munis version was scheduled for adoption by the town in September 2012, which will allow these projections to be more readily accessible.

Town officials reported to review team members that the district is cooperative and timely in making required submissions to the town. Town and district officials noted that communications between the district and the town are very cooperative and positive.

Purchases are made in the district using best business practices for purchases up to $4,999. Three quotes are needed for purchases from $5,000 to $24,999. All purchases over $25,000 are sent out to bid. The town's purchasing agent conducts all bidding under the provisions of G.L. Chapter 30B. The city purchasing agent holds Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) certification, as does the district's business operations manager.

The district provides a monthly financial report to the principals, grant director, and school committee. This report tracks budgeted to actual expenditures to monitor the rate at which the district's budget is expended.

Maintenance and Capital Improvements

The district annually reviews formal preventive maintenance plans. Each year, the director of buildings and grounds meets with every principal individually to discuss the school's maintenance concerns. Based on those discussions, a Five-Year Capital Projections Plan is created and presented to the school committee and town officials. The plan projects capital expenditures for maintenance from fiscal year 2013 through fiscal year 2017 at $14.6 million

($3.2 million for fiscal year 2013, $6.2 million for fiscal year 2014, $2.1 million for fiscal year 2015, $1.5 million for fiscal year 2016 and $1.5 million for fiscal year 2017. Further, the district has created an expanded 25-year Annual Capital Expenditure by School Plan that projects the annual capital expenditure schedule broken down by school site from fiscal year 2012 through fiscal year 2036.

There is a Memorandum of Agreement between the Framingham Public Schools and the Town of Framingham, signed and dated in January 2007, relative to expenditures for education that can be included on the Department of Education's End-of-Year Report and Financial Report.

School Budget Procedures

The annual budget-building process is initiated by the superintendent, who provides principals with a packet of information relative to their spending in the previous several years. The superintendent indicated that the budget is school-based, based on needs developed by each principal. At the same time, the superintendent and business administration director meet regularly with town officials both officially and unofficially to get a "signal" early in October from the town on its projected support level. Committee members further indicated their expectation that the superintendent work closely with town administrators and that transparency will be important in all discussions. Committee members believe that due to these efforts, town officials are no longer hesitant to ask questions about the school budget.

The district's fiscal year 2012 initial budget request exceeded the final budget appropriation by $5 million ($101 million versus $96 million). The superintendent was able to align the school budget with the town's allocation of $96.6 million.

Once the district's budget proposal is ready, it is presented to the finance subcommittee of the school committee for consideration. Principals attend these meetings to present their budgets. The town's finance committee sends a representative to all school finance committee subcommittee meetings to fully participate in all discussions. The district sends supporting detail electronically to that representative. The district's budget is presented on Town Meeting floor by the chair of the school committee's finance subcommittee. Throughout the process, the superintendent and business administration director indicated that they make a concerted effort to ensure that the process provides clarity of purpose, appropriate supporting data, and open lines of communication relative to the district's financial needs.

In summary, the district has created and consistently follows a sound set of financial processes and operating procedures to manage its operating budget. It communicates its financial needs to town officials in a cooperative and transparent manner that provides clarity of purpose and appropriate supporting data. This open and collaborative approach has helped the district to continuously gather community support for increases in its operating budget.

Recommendations

The priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.

Leadership and Governance

The review team recommends that the district, under the leadership of the school committee and the new superintendent, continue its plan to develop a Strategic Plan that will provide clarity of vision and establish priorities for multiple years.

Three separate but simultaneous interviews with the school committee showed a strong recognition of the need for a Strategic Plan for the district. In discussing the need for a Strategic Plan with the review team, the school committee posited a timeline of three to five years for one. This timeline was consistent with the hope expressed by the school committee that the advent of the new superintendent would be coincidental with a long tenure for the new superintendent and the beginning of greater stability in school district leadership. The review team is convinced that the development of a long-term vision for the school district through a Strategic Plan has the prospect of inculcating a sense of loyalty on the part of administrators, not necessarily to a particular person or to a school committee, but rather to a vision of improved student success and the steps needed to realize that vision.

In discussing the need for a Strategic Plan, the school committee noted that such a prospect would enable the school committee to move beyond the one-year focus of the District Improvement Plan (DIP). The shift to a larger, more fully developed and articulated direction for the district will help clarify the interplay between the goals of the school committee, the goals of the superintendent, the DIP, and also the SIP for each school. Because goals dictate actions, the existence of a Strategic Plan will also help the school committee focus on what kinds of data they should be requesting the superintendent to present to them. A Strategic Plan will also help the school committee assess the effectiveness of its practices in general.

Finally, it seems that the development of a Strategic Plan with appropriate goals and adequate staffing to achieve them will coincide with a forthcoming report by NESDEC on possible inequities within the district as a result of the policy of in-district parental choice of schools. (See Chart 1 in the second Student Achievement finding above.) Using the Strategic Plan to address any inequities found in the school district with the advice of NESDEC, the school committee and the incoming superintendent will be taking the necessary steps to allay the concerns expressed to the review team and noted in the Leadership and Governance section of the report about the distribution of high-needs students in the district.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should develop a standard format for curriculum documents that includes essential elements of a fully developed and user-friendly curriculum. Furthermore, it should develop a regular cycle for review and revision of the curriculum that ensures alignment to state-of-the art content as well as to research-based instructional practices, and provides hierarchical alignment of curriculum for each subject from pre-kindergarten to grade 12.

The district makes some curriculum documents available on its Wiki site. This accessibility to all staff members has the potential to create a set of living documents capable of being updated and reviewed systematically and not just considered as binders on a shelf.

Because of the uncoordinated nature of current curriculum documents, a common organizational format for all subjects is needed. This would require the inclusion of all up-to-date elements of solid curriculum documents: standards; learning objectives; instructional strategies that include strategies aimed at developing higher-order thinking skills and providing small group collaborative learning opportunities; multiple assessment formats such as formative, summative, benchmark, and peer assessments and self-assessments; timelines; and instructional resources that include not only textbooks but also websites, videos, and other technological applications for learning and teaching. The district is advised to consider the high school mathematics department's documents as a guide to this work.

Committees are currently assigned to align curriculum to the new Massachusetts curriculum standards. It is important that curriculum not only be reformatted but also be updated to include research-based, best instructional practices to help guide teachers in how to teach as well as what to teach. The emphasis on literacy as the common link across disciplines found in the new College and Career Readiness (CCR) sections of the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks can also provide direction in integrating new curriculum work across academic subjects.

To effect change in the curriculum development process, the district should identify specific staff roles charged with leading and implementing the review and revision of curriculum for each discipline. Most continuous improvement cycles for curriculum take place over multiple years and are attended to by a committee for each academic and co-curricular program. Each committee is composed of staff members from multiple grades for each program. The new director of educational operations can be helpful in guiding both the structure and the implementation of this process. Internal professional development for curriculum development can provide consistency in process and language/terminology across the district. There are also many fine examples of this work to which the district might look for models.

It is important, particularly in a district as diverse as Framingham, to provide staff working on curriculum development with clear districtwide goals for curriculum and instruction and assessment that are linked to continuous improvement goals for all subgroups of students. These goals should be grounded in a Strategic Plan that provides a long-term direction for district

improvement. These steps taken together can guide the district in creating cohesive, fully developed, user-friendly curriculum documents that will benefit all students.

Through a collaborative process that includes dialogue between teachers and administrators, the district should develop a systemwide understanding of high-quality instructional practices and prioritize the communication, implementation, and monitoring of these practices throughout the district's classrooms.

In classrooms across the district teachers were observed providing a positive classroom climate for learning. They were well prepared. They demonstrated strong content knowledge. They were articulate. These and other observed characteristics are the foundation on which to build a strong educational program. But the repertoire of current instructional practices as observed in 113 classrooms was limited and in the judgment of the review team insufficient to substantially raise student achievement.

In recent years, the district has eliminated several key positions such as director of curriculum and staff development, K–8 ELA director, K–8 mathematics director, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and the director of technology. Some of these roles have been held in intervals by interim appointees. These are roles with the responsibility for providing clarity and direction in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Without a stable cohort of leaders in place, the capacity of the district to share a common knowledge base about current best practices in these areas has been diminished for both teachers and administrators. Some of the functions of the district leadership staff, such as helping to prepare school-based or districtwide professional development offerings and linking those sessions to curriculum and instructional needs, are now assigned to principals or part-time K–8 coordinators and to department heads, where they are in place. A further impediment to developing shared understandings is that there are no regularly scheduled meeting times during the school day for teachers and leaders to convene to analyze data and discuss progress in student achievement, curriculum refinements, and instructional improvements.

The allocation of administrators' time to monitor and observe teachers' instructional practice throughout the district is critical. Currently many levels of administrators feel confined by time and management demands. This diminishes the likelihood that supervising instruction will be a priority. Many elementary principals, currently without assistant principals and serving at large schools of 500 to 600 students, feel particularly constrained by daily demands on their time and are aware of the need for more time so that they can monitor classrooms more often than they currently are able to do.

As an initial step, the district, under the guidance of the new director of educational operations, should design a collaborative process that reaches across schools and levels to discuss district expectations and definitions of what constitutes good instructional practice. The goal is to arrive at a shared understanding districtwide. Videos of excellent teaching models can be used to stimulate discussions. Each academic discipline and school level can be charged with infusing good practice into its pedagogy. Leaders should be held accountable for monitoring the quality

of teaching in their schools and academic disciplines. While this conversation is one that could continue indefinitely, within a reasonable amount of time teachers and leaders can reach accord on the district's expectations for good teaching and how to make it a reality in every classroom, every day.

The addition of four new principal positions, to the four largest schools, can also help, by giving these principals the time to hold teachers more accountable for instruction by providing regular feedback to teachers using the protocol for walkthroughs that has already been developed. Also, if the district commits itself to more timely performance evaluations it can improve the monitoring of instruction and thereby improve both teaching and learning.

The district can also consider collaborating with its DSAC or another agency to provide professional development on specific instructional strategies to develop internal capacity among staff members who could then, in turn, provide ongoing modeling and mentoring in classrooms in addition to that provided by current coaches in kindergarten through grade 8. By making the commitment to broaden teachers' repertoires of instructional strategies by equipping them to understand and implement research-based best practices, the district could move its teaching to great and significantly improve student achievement.

Assessment

The district has taken several important steps to establish a strong assessment system. To maximize the potential of assessments to benefit student achievement, the district should include multiple forms of assessment as components of newly developed curriculum documents, integrate more frequent informal assessments into instruction, and provide the needed professional development and time to use assessments and assessment data well.

The recommendation for assessment is inextricably linked to the recommendations for curriculum and instruction. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are three legs of a teaching and learning stool. The stool cannot stand solidly until all three legs are firm and robust. Each leg must function effectively on its own as well as interdependently as a whole system. To improve the teaching and learning system, all three components— curriculum, instruction and assessment—must be addressed simultaneously.

As noted above, to be complete, the curriculum requires updating and documentation. This was to be addressed in the summer work for 2012 to address the new Massachusetts curriculum standards, but with the need for a broad scope of work, the summer assignments are likely the beginning of an ongoing curriculum renewal process. As curriculum is revised and renewed, assessments designed using multiple assessment strategies should be integrated into new curriculum documents.

As for instruction, the district should define, communicate, implement, and monitor an instructional model grounded on research-based, best practices. One component of good instruction is good assessment practice: knowing how to develop and implement a

comprehensive and balanced assessment system built on multiple assessment formats— for instance, formative, benchmark, summative. Such a system can signal how well students are learning, how well teachers are teaching, and how well the curriculum meets the district's educational vision and goals. A strong assessment system helps inform decisions to adjust curriculum and to modify instruction to meet students' diverse learning needs, as well as guiding decisions about student support and interventions. Finally, a strong assessment system also provides much, but not all, of the data that teachers and leaders can use to develop their professional practice and improve student learning and success in school.

With all of this in mind, the review team recognizes that the district has taken several important steps to establish a strong assessment system. It has created and communicated a vision for assessment centered on the data pyramid that requires the use of multiple forms of assessment. It has articulated a cycle of inquiry that uses assessment data and other data in facilitated small groups of teachers to identify, understand, and resolve learning problems. With the establishment of data teams and the introduction at the elementary level of the Grade Level Intervention Meetings and protocol, and with the work of some department meetings in grades 9–12, this is clear.

To maximize the potential of assessments and assessment data to improve student learning, the district should continue to expand the assessment system so that it is composed of multiple assessment formats across all subjects. It should be more consistently applied, both formally and informally, across all subjects in all schools. In addition, the assessment system can eventually be enhanced by the addition of more authentic assessments such as student work samples, journals, projects, written responses to literature, lab reports, other documentation of scientific inquiry and portfolios, and even electronic portfolios— to name just a few.

The district should also provide professional development to empower teachers to use assessments well and to access, analyze, and use assessment data well, both collectively in small groups and in their individual practice. Some teachers can benefit from learning to develop and use a broader range of formative assessments more effectively. Some teachers can benefit from training on accessing, analyzing, and using data to improve their practice and results for students.

In addition, regularly scheduled time should be provided during the school day for teachers and leaders to collaborate in small communities of practice to investigate teaching and learning using the tool of analyzing assessments and achievement data. The goal is to use data to solve learning and teaching problems: it can be used to fine-tune curriculum, plan instruction, and guide interventions to support low-performing subgroups. Without regularly scheduled time during the school day, teachers must now find common time for investigation and planning with colleagues either during their individual daily planning time or after school. Regularly scheduled time should be made available for these activities.

By simultaneously establishing stronger systems and practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the district can achieve a culture of continuous improvement and accountability. The results can benefit all learners as well as all educators.

As it upgrades its technology infrastructure and builds its capacity to use technology effectively, the district should establish a comprehensive data management system that supports a robust student information system accessible to all stakeholders.

The superintendent at the time of the review, the school committee, and the town should be recognized for identifying and acknowledging the need to upgrade the district's technology infrastructure and build district capacity to use technology effectively for improvement. In addition, the town should be commended for committing $2,000,000 over four years to accomplish its technology goals.

As part of this effort, the district should strengthen its data management system in order to support a robust student information system (SIS). The SIS should be password accessible to all relevant stakeholders such as leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Such a system should make it easy to access and communicate data and information from multiple sources. For example, the system could include assignments, grades, narrative assessments, data for internal and external assessment, attendance, behavior, discipline, student risk factors, and student demographics. Apart from appropriate hardware and software, two other "scarce resources" will be required to create a data management system that will realize the potential of a SIS: people with the needed expertise and time for collaboration.

There has been limited continuity in technology leadership in recent years. This was to be addressed with the arrival of a new technology director on July 1, 2012. It will be important for the new director to collaboratively develop a new technology action plan to advance the district's technology goals. The potential for what a robust student information system supported by a strong data management platform can be used for is as wide and as deep as the district is willing to envision and support. Several successful models are already in use in Massachusetts school districts. The focus over the next several years should be to ensure that the district has the needed resources—people with expertise and regular time for collaboration as well as the requisite systems and hardware/software—for a well-functioning system.

Human Resources and Professional Development

As it implements an evaluation system consistent with the new ESE educator evaluation system during 2012-2013, the district must ensure that its new system is implemented with fidelity.

This district review provided evidence that serious problems with educator evaluation identified in 2005 in a report by the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability had not been corrected. One concern is with evaluations' instructiveness, with wide variation noted in the quality of comments provided to support individual growth and professional effectiveness. Of even greater concern is the issue of timeliness: the district does not produce performance evaluations for either teachers or administrators when required to do so by state law and local contract. This review revealed that when completed, teacher evaluations were generally written

well; however, over 40 percent of the district's professional status teachers had not received evaluations over the past three school years. District and school administrators had been evaluated only once in the seven years since the 2005 EQA Review.

In June 2011 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) adopted new educator evaluation regulations to replace the previous ones. As a participant in the Race to the Top grant program, Framingham is required to begin implementing a new evaluation system in the 2012-2013 school year that is fully consistent with the new state evaluation system. Reviewers learned that a 14-member committee composed of Framingham teachers and administrators had been meeting regularly—and according to interviewees productively—during the 2011–2012 school year to revise the district's evaluation system to align it with new state requirements. Ultimately, however, it is the school committee and superintendent of schools who are responsible for the district's implementing a rigorous and comprehensive evaluative process for teachers and administrators that is consistent with the requirements of the state's new system.

The new superintendent should make the implementation of needed improvements to the district's evaluative procedures and supervisory practices a high priority. In doing so, the superintendent should clearly articulate this as a central goal for the district and prominently include and monitor progress toward attainment through the district and school improvement plans. The district should ensure that all evaluators are consistently held accountable for producing high-quality staff evaluations that are timely, instructive, and fully consistent with the requirements of the new state system. Greatly improved supervisory practices should be established and required of all school administrators. Principals and other supervisors should be expected to visit all classrooms regularly in order to closely monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their schools and provide specific and timely feedback to their staff with the goal of continuous instructional improvement.

The new educator evaluation model provides opportunities for school districts to develop and implement

- Professional development for evaluators;
- Training to develop meaningful professional practice and student learning goals;
- Systems to ensure
    - that evaluators have the time and support to carry out the new system with fidelity and
    - that district and school goals are aligned with administrator goals
- Professional development for educators that prioritizes educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process.

Taking advantage of these opportunities will address the areas the review team identified for improvement in the district's old educator evaluation system.

ESE data shows that over the five years before the review student academic performance across the district's schools was nearly flat (see first Student Achievement finding). A fully effective supervision and evaluation program for educators has the potential to make a positive and powerful impact on student academic achievement. By carefully identifying professional strengths and needs, a high-quality evaluation system has the capacity to significantly improve the overall performance of teachers and administrators alike. It can also greatly facilitate the district's ability to monitor and improve classroom instructional practices, identify and support needed school-level enhancements, systemwide initiatives, and professional development priorities, and accurately measure progress toward their achievement. A consistent and rigorous supervision and evaluation process will empower school and district leaders to make meaningful and sustained improvements to teaching and learning and so enhance learning opportunities and outcomes for all students in the district.

The district's professional development program should be revised so that it has

- **a clearly defined leadership structure with one individual in charge and one representative professional development committee and**
- **a narrowed scope that is more directly aligned with and supportive of prioritized district improvement objectives.**

The district is committed to providing learning opportunities for its staff. Its professional development (PD) program offers faculty a range of options and formats to expand their content knowledge and professional skills, as well as meet their re-licensure requirements. In general, however, the program provides an overly broad array of uncoordinated, largely unrelated topics and activities rather than the kind of focused and sustained PD needed to develop a strong understanding and mastery of specific educational practices and systematically promote the district's core academic and strategic goals. Additionally, the PD program has not had the well-defined leadership structure needed to provide the steady direction, unified planning and coordination, and consistent oversight necessary for it to be fully effective.

Framingham should revise its PD program so that it better identifies and serves the specific needs of students, teachers, and the school district as a whole. It should systematically incorporate program assessment data, research-based instructional practice, staff evaluations, and student achievement data into program planning and development. Most importantly, the focus of PD must be narrowed so that it is more directly linked with whatever is driving improvement within the district, such as the overarching goals typically found in a Strategic Plan and a District Improvement Plan. By concentrating programs and resources on fewer, better defined, and more sustained PD initiatives that are supportive of prioritized goals, the district will create an integrated and efficient PD system capable of serving the identified needs of staff and students, thus advancing the district's educational mission.

The district should clearly define a PD leadership structure. At the time of the review the district did not have a formal centralized structure, an individual or a permanent standing committee whose designated responsibility was the oversight and direction of the PD program. The

teachers' association's Instructional and Professional Development Committee was not operational, and the composition, role, and responsibilities of an *ad hoc* committee created by the interim assistant superintendent called the Curriculum and Instructional Team were unclear to many teachers and administrators interviewed. This has resulted in continuing problems with planning, preparation, coordination, and communication that have compromised the effectiveness of Framingham's PD programming.

Framingham should give responsibility for PD to an individual with the necessary expertise and administrative experience. The district should also consider ways to replace the current ad hoc committee and non-operational teachers' association committee with a single unified committee composed of administrators and teacher representatives from each of the district's schools. This would create an efficient mechanism by which teachers and administrators could collaborate in planning and implementing meaningful and appropriate PD, such as the PD recommended above in curriculum development, instruction, and the use of assessments and assessment results. It would also serve to enhance teachers' sense of ownership and support for the PD initiatives, whether undertaken during release time or PD days or embedded in the school day, that were subsequently developed.

A district's PD program is one of its most important systems. The primary goals of an effective program are to significantly enhance the professional competencies of teachers and administrators and to directly support the educational objectives of the schools and the district, ultimately resulting in steadily improving student academic achievement. By revising its PD system, the district can greatly enhance the program's capacity to meet these goals.

Student Support

The district should use its current systems of improvement planning, monitoring, and reporting on student achievement to focus more on individual students and subgroups of students. This focus will drive the development of more targeted academic assistance for student subgroups, particularly for students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and ELLs.

The district is beginning to use data to inform instruction and improve student achievement. The district has systems in place on which to build to monitor student performance and target assistance more precisely.

The current District Improvement Plan (DIP) and aligned School Improvement Plans (SIPs) have the potential to provide a mechanism for annually reporting on changes in student academic performance. The first goal in the DIP states that "All Framingham students will demonstrate at least one year's growth in Math and Literacy skills as measured by MAP, MCAS, and/or comparable assessments." Each SIP also has a goal to improve student performance by one year each year. One school (Wilson Elementary) included in its SIP a specific goal pertaining to the achievement of ELLs.

- All schools with significant ELL populations should have a goal about achievement of its ELLs, as should the district.

In addition to MCAS, the district has an array of assessment tools intended for use across grades. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests are administered twice a year in grades 3–5 and three times a year in grades 6–8. MAP can measure and report on progress towards SIP goals annually. The Development Reading Assessment-2 (DRA2) is used in kindergarten through grade 5. Teachers use DRA2 to plan literacy instruction and interventions. Think Math, the mathematics instructional program for kindergarten through grade 5, includes common unit tests. The district has the tools to monitor the performance of student subgroups when they are consistently used with a lens toward subgroup performance. Reviewers were told that the special education faculty is already beginning to look at MAP data to inform their work, as well as disaggregating MCAS results. The district should follow through on this work by developing a data-based protocol for instructional intervention, as indicated by the former assistant superintendent's March 2010 special education report, so that student achievement can be improved for all struggling students, especially students with disabilities.

Along with having specific goals targeting high-needs subgroups included in the DIP and SIPs and having an assortment of assessment tools in place, the district uses Grade Level Intervention Meetings (GLIMs), School Evaluation Teams (SETs) and the four-step process, and middle school literacy labs, all of which can support a more precise focus. These are admirable initiatives that with the use of disaggregated data and closer analysis of subgroup and individual student performance can provide an excellent system for monitoring for all students. For instance, GLIMs can serve as an opportunity for more deliberate focus on subgroups and individual student growth. Student progress can be charted and monitored throughout the GLIM process and periodic adjustments to student grouping can take place. SETs can be implemented consistently across the district. Other district programs, too—for instance after-school help or peer tutoring at the middle school level—can benefit from greater use of monitoring and targeting of particular students. The district has many structures in place to meet the goals of this recommendation. The use of disaggregated data to analyze student subgroup performance will drive the development of more support and targeted academic assistance for students who need it. This will offer schools the greatest opportunity to improve the achievement of students who are the most persistent underperformers.

Financial and Asset Management

The district is urged to continue its emphasis on keeping open the already good lines of communication among the school committee, district leaders and town officials.

Beginning in fiscal year 2009 with the hiring of a new business administration director, the district focused its efforts on building an improved working relationship with the town that was not previously in place. It was through the efforts of the school committee, business administration director and superintendent that, over the past three to four years, the district

achieved its goal of establishing and sustaining a good working relationship with the town. This improved relationship played a role in the local appropriations for education being increased from fiscal year 2010 (total actual local appropriations $129,294,676) to fiscal year 2013 (total estimated local appropriations $136,107,046) (see Table 2 in District Profile). The practice of having a representative of the town's finance committee sitting with the school committee's finance subcommittee and participating in deliberations increases awareness on the part of both the district and the town of each other's respective needs and capacities.

In addition to annual budget increases, town and district officials suggest other outcomes that were facilitated by improved working relationships. These include $2,000,000 in technology acquisition funding from Capital Improvement over several years. Other initiatives have demonstrated efficient and cooperative management: a transition from district-owned school buses to contracted-out transportation services, the impending adoption of a new Munis software system, the school and town collaboration to realize a more efficient and still effective health insurance plan with an 80 percent-20 percent cost sharing component, and the addition of a supplemental $1,000,000 in the special education out-of-district tuition line item to address the structural deficit in that account.

The district is urged to maintain the good will and strong communication between the school committee, the district, and town officials.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Framingham Public Schools was conducted from May 21–24, 2012, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Owen Conway, Ph. D., Leadership and Governance

Mary Eirich, Curriculum and Instruction

Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., Assessment and Review Team Coordinator

Frank Sambuceti, Ph. D., Human Resources and Professional Development

Lenora Jennings, Student Support

William J. Contreras, Ed. D., Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted as part of the review of the Framingham Public Schools.

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Framingham financial personnel: chief financial officer and interim town manager.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Framingham School Committee: school committee chair, school committee vice chair, school committee clerk, and four other school committee members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Framingham Teachers' Association: president, treasurer, secretary, grievance chair, two co-chairs of professional development committee, chair of unit negotiating team, nine school representatives, and six other union members.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Framingham Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, interim assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, business administration director, human resources director, gifted and talented director, bilingual director, student support services director, special education director, health services director, and community resource development director.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Framingham Public Schools: Barbieri Elementary School, Brophy Elementary School, Dunning Elementary School, Hemenway Elementary School, McCarthy Elementary School, Potter Road Elementary School, Stapleton Elementary School, Wilson Elementary School, Cameron Middle School, Fuller Middle School, Walsh Middle School, and Framingham High School. The review team did not visit the Blocks Preschool.
    - During some school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals and teachers. The team interviewed 1 elementary teacher, 6 middle school teachers, and 10 high school teachers in focus groups or interview sessions. In addition, a number of coordinators, coaches, and other instructional support personnel from the elementary, middle, and high schools were interviewed.
    - The review team conducted 113 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the 12 schools visited.

  The review team conducted an interview with 11 high school students from grades 9–12.
    - The review team conducted two interviews with parent representatives.
- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:

- Data on student and school performance, including achievement and growth data and enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
- Data on the district's staffing and finances.
- Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).
- District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks for students/families and faculty, school schedules, and the district's end-of-the-year financial reports.
- All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the district review of the Framingham Public Schools, conducted from May 21–24, 2012.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
May 21 Orientation with district and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with teachers' association; interview with town officials; meeting with parent council members.	May 22 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits (Cameron Middle School, Potter Road Elementary School, and Barbieri Elementary School); classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups.	May 23 School visits (Fuller Middle School, Walsh Middle School, Framingham High School, Stapleton Elementary School, and Brophy Elementary School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meeting; school committee interviews; meeting with Special Education parent group officers.	May 24 School visits (Framingham High School, McCarthy Elementary School, Dunning Elementary School, Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, and Hemenway Elementary School); classroom observations; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with superintendent and superintendent elect; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

Appendix C: Student Performance 2007–2011[14]

Table C1: Framingham Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)
2009–2011 English Language Arts

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	**Percent Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Proficient**	***Median SGP***
All Grades—District	**64**	***50***	**64**	***51***	**64**	***49***
All Grades—State	67	*50*	68	*50*	69	*50*
Grade 3—District	**54**	***NA****	**52**	***NA****	**53**	***NA****
Grade 3—State	57	*NA**	63	*NA**	61	*NA**
Grade 4—District	**50**	***51.5***	**49**	***51***	**51**	***57***
Grade 4—State	53	*50*	54	*50*	53	*51*
Grade 5—District	**62**	***45***	**58**	***46***	**62**	***48***
Grade 5—State	63	*50*	63	*50*	67	*50*
Grade 6—District	**66**	***54***	**69**	***50***	**58**	***38***
Grade 6—State	66	*50*	69	*50*	68	*50*
Grade 7—District	**65**	***48***	**66**	***44.5***	**70**	***49***
Grade 7—State	70	*50*	72	*50*	73	*50*
Grade 8—District	**76**	***58***	**77**	***61***	**75**	***58***
Grade 8—State	78	*50*	78	*50*	79	*50*
Grade 10—District	**78**	***44***	**78**	***53***	**84**	***41***
Grade 10—State	81	50	78	50	84	50

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website
*High school proficiency rates in this table do not include students in special education out-of-district placements.

[14] Slight variations in this report in the proficiency rates from School/District Profiles, District Analysis and Review Tool, and the Education Data Warehouse are due to differences in procedures for rounding.

Table C2: Framingham Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)
2009–2011 Mathematics

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	**Percent Advanced/ Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Advanced/ Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Advanced/ Proficient**	***Median SGP***
All Grades—District	**54**	***50***	**55**	***50***	**54**	***51***
All Grades—State	55	*50*	59	*50*	58	*50*
Grade 3—District	**58**	***NA****	**59**	***NA****	**63**	***NA****
Grade 3—State	60	*NA**	65	*NA**	66	*NA**
Grade 4—District	**47**	***44***	**42**	***41***	**42**	***51***
Grade 4—State	48	*50*	48	*49*	47	*50*
Grade 5—District	**55**	***57***	**50**	***51***	**52**	***47.5***
Grade 5—State	54	*50*	55	*50*	59	*50*
Grade 6—District	**49**	***37***	**50**	***34***	**47**	***41***
Grade 6—State	57	*50*	59	*50*	58	*50*
Grade 7—District	**46**	***46***	**51**	***57***	**45**	***53***
Grade 7—State	49	*50*	53	*50*	51	*50*
Grade 8—District	**51**	***51***	**51**	***51***	**51**	***56***
Grade 8—State	48	*50*	51	*51*	52	*50*
Grade 10—District*	**79**	***68***	**78**	***65***	**84**	***60***
Grade 10—State*	75	*50*	75	50	77	*50*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website
*High school proficiency rates in this table do not include students in special education out-of-district placements.

Table C3: Framingham Public Schools
State Accountability and Assistance Levels for 2010–2011
MCAS Proficiency Rates for ELA and Mathematics
All Elementary Schools, 2007–2011

	Level	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ELA						
Barbieri	3	55	50	42	47	49
Brophy	3	48	44	42	38	44
Dunning	2	59	60	65	64	62
Hemenway	1	74	76	79	76	79
McCarthy	2	76	62	57	56	55
Potter Road	1	65	62	65	62	66
Stapleton	2	61	57	58	52	59
Wilson	3	43	39	39	34	33
Mathematics						
Barbieri	3	50	47	40	37	36
Brophy	3	39	41	39	41	38
Dunning	2	54	58	57	58	58
Hemenway	1	71	71	79	70	77
McCarthy	2	57	58	54	51	46
Potter Road	1	59	67	68	66	69
Stapleton	2	54	49	51	45	59
Wilson	3	41	48	40	40	38
Source: ESE Data Warehouse						

Table C4: Framingham Public Schools and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
for Selected Subgroups
2011 English Language Arts

	Framingham Public Schools			State	
	Number of Students Included	**CPI**	***Median SGP***	**CPI**	***Median SGP***
All Students	***4,193***	**83.7**	***49***	**87.2**	***50***
African-American/Black	*267*	79.1	*46*	77.4	*47*
Asian	*250*	92.1	*57*	90.2	*59*
Hispanic/Latino	*926*	68.9	*48*	74.2	*46*
White	*2,670*	88.5	*49*	90.9	*51*
ELL	*569*	62.6	*58*	59.4	*48*
FELL	*226*	76	*48.5*	81.7	*54*
Special Education	*1,128*	64.7	*42.5*	68.3	*42*
Low-Income	*1,693*	72.8	*47*	77.1	*46*

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.
3. "ELL" students are English language learners.
4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table C5: Framingham Public Schools and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
for Selected Subgroups
2011 Mathematics

	Framingham Public Schools			State	
	Number of Students Included	**CPI**	***Median SGP***	**CPI**	***Median SGP***
All Students	***4,200***	**77**	***51***	**79.9**	***50***
African-American/Black	*268*	67.4	*48*	65	*47*
Asian	*250*	89.3	*57*	89.5	*64*
Hispanic/Latino	*924*	59	*50*	64.4	*46*
White	*2,682*	83	*51*	84.3	*50*
ELL	*581*	57.2	*51.5*	56.3	*52*
FELL	*227*	69.5	*47*	75.1	*53*
Special Education	*1,123*	56.9	*43*	57.7	*43*
Low-Income	*1,699*	63.5	*48*	67.3	*46*

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.
3. "ELL" students are English language learners.
4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Appendix D: Instructional Inventory Data

Chart D1: Framingham Public Schools
Instructional Inventory Summary Data
Comparison of Percentages of Observed Instructional Characteristics by Category
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

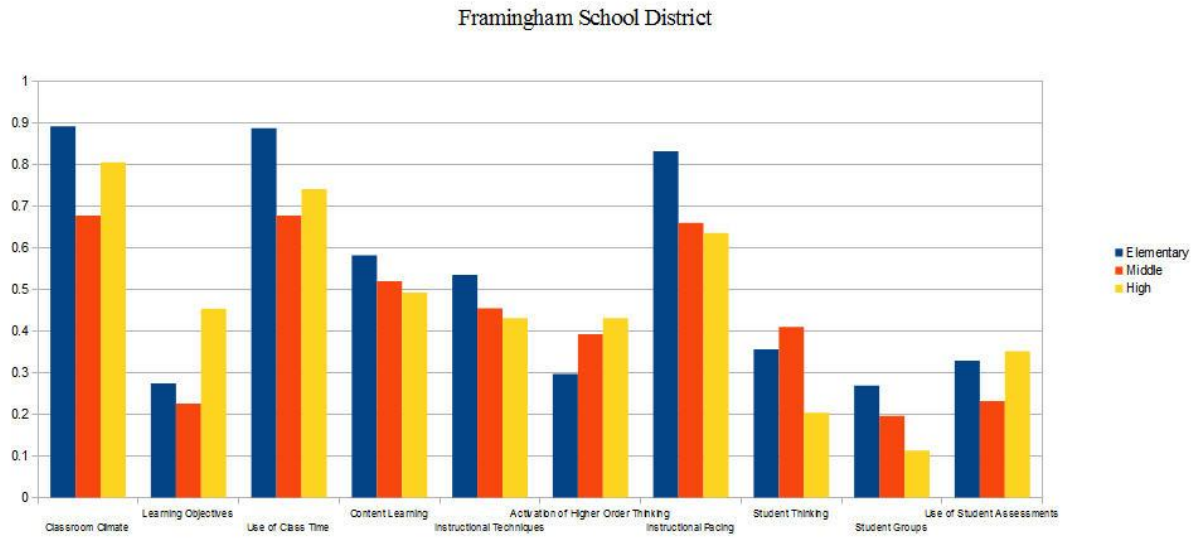


Table D2: Framingham Public Schools
Instructional Inventory Summary Data
Percentages of Observed Characteristics
By School Levels

(Percentages of instances observed are given for the whole category; *numbers* of instances observed are given for each characteristic in the category.)

Framingham School District			
School Summary Data Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Observation Tool Summary	Elementary	Middle	High
Classroom Climate	83.25%	67.86%	80.68%
1. Behavioral exceptions, class rules, procedures are clearly communicated.	51	21	15
2. Students behave according to rules and expectations	62	22	19
3. Students and teachers demonstrate positive and respectful relationships.	63	24	19
4. Teachers set high expectations for learning and convey these to students.	49	9	18
Learning Objectives	27.51%	22.62%	45.45%
5. Learning objective is communicated to students (clearly posted, explained, or referenced during the lesson).	24	8	14
6. Learning objectives identifies student learning outcome (NOT student task). (Applies only if 5 observed)	14	5	8
7. Learning objective drives all components of the lesson. (applies only if 5 & 6 observed)	14	6	8
Use of Class Time	68.89%	67.86%	74.24%
8. Teacher is prepared, materials are readily available.	62	27	20
9. Teacher explains task instructions and (when applicable) provides choices for when tasks are completed.	53	15	13
10. Students respond to routines/expectations (e.g., transition smoothly and quickly between learning act, respond to cues)	53	15	16
Content Learning	58.28%	52.04%	49.35%
11. Students make connections to prior knowledge and/or experience.	41	22	17
12. Students engage with a variety of curriculum resources and/or technology that enhances their learning.	26	11	7
13. Students engage with content through a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate their learning styles.	30	14	3
14. Students participate in different or tiered activities based on academic readiness.	21	1	0
15. Teacher communicates academic content with clarity and accuracy.	54	19	16
16. Content appears appropriate for grade and level.	60	21	20
17. Students apply new conceptual knowledge during the lesson.	25	14	13
Instructional Techniques	53.57%	45.54%	43.18%
18. Direct, whole group instruction (lecture, Q&A, modeling)	41	22	18
19. Guided practice (students practice together with teacher)	42	14	11
20. Small group/pair learning (students work together without direct instruction)	23	8	3
21. Independent practice (student has full responsibility for completing the task)	25	7	6
Activation of Higher Order Thinking	29.76%	35.25%	43.18%
22. Student examine, analyze, or interpret information.	31	20	16
23. Students form predictions, develop arguments, or evaluate information	27	10	11
24. Students evaluate/reflect on their own thinking, progress, and approach.	11	10	8
25. Students generate questions (clarifying or new) related to the goals of the lesson.	6	4	3
Instructional Pacing	83.33%	66.07%	63.64%
26. The lesson is paced in a way that allows all students to be engaged.	56	24	17
27. Teacher uses wait time to allow for responses from all students.	45	13	11
Student Thinking	35.71%	41.07%	20.45%
28. Students use various means, verbally or in writing, to represent their ideas and thinking.	30	16	7
29. Students are engaged in structures that advance their thinking, i.e., think-pair-share, turn-and-talk.	15	7	2
Student Groups	26.36%	19.64%	11.36%
30. Students inquire, explore, or problem solve together in small groups/pairs.	20	10	2
31. Students are held accountable for their contributions to group work.	14	1	3
Use of Student Assessments	32.94%	23.21%	35.23%
32. At least one informal assessment (e.g., thumb tool, ticket to leave) aligned to the lesson goals is used to check for understd.	25	13	8
33. Teacher adjusts instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessment.	16	4	4
34. Student receive feedback that tells where they are in relation to the learning goals.	21	4	9
35. Students revise work based on feedback.	17	5	10

Table D3: Framingham Public Schools
Instructional Inventory Summary Data
Number of Instances of Observed/Not Observed Characteristics and Percentages Observed
Elementary Schools

(The *number* of observed classes is noted in the third row to the far right, under *Percent*.)

Framingham School District			
Elementary School Summary		Not	Percent
Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Observation Tool	Observed	Observed	63
Classroom Climate			
1. Behavioral exceptions, class rules, procedures are clearly communicated.	51	12	81.0%
2. Students behave according to rules and expectations	62	1	98.4%
3. Students and teachers demonstrate positive and respectful relationships.	63	0	100.0%
4. Teachers set high expectations for learning and convey these to students.	49	14	77.8%
Learning Objectives			
5. Learning objective is communicated to students (clearly posted, explained, or referenced during the lesson).	24	39	38.1%
6. Learning objectives identifies student learning outcome (NOT student task). (Applies only if 5 observed)	14	49	22.2%
7. Learning objective drives all components of the lesson. (applies only if 5 & 6 observed)	14	49	22.2%
Use of Class Time			
8. Teacher is prepared, materials are readily available.	62	1	98.4%
9. Teacher explains task instructions and (when applicable) provides choices for when tasks are completed.	53	10	84.1%
10. Students respond to routines/expectations (e.g., transition smoothly and quickly between learning act, respond to cues)	53	10	84.1%
Content Learning			
11. Students make connections to prior knowledge and/or experience.	41	22	65.1%
12. Students engage with a variety of curriculum resources and/or technology that enhances their learning.	26	37	41.3%
13. Students engage with content through a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate their learning styles...	30	33	47.6%
14. Students participate in different or tiered activities based on academic readiness.	21	42	33.3%
15. Teacher communicates academic content with clarity and accuracy.	54	9	85.7%
16. Content appears appropriate for grade and level.	60	3	95.2%
17. Students apply new conceptual knowledge during the lesson.	25	38	39.7%
Instructional Techniques			
18. Direct, whole group instruction (lecture, Q&A, modeling)	41	22	65.1%
19. Guided practice (students practice together with teacher)	42	21	66.7%
20. Small group/pair learning (students work together without direct instruction)	23	40	36.5%
21. Independent practice (student has full responsibility for completing the task)	29	34	46.0%
Activation of Higher Order Thinking			
22. Student examine, analyze, or interpret information.	31	32	49.2%
23. Students form predictions, develop arguments, or evaluate information	27	36	42.9%
24. Students evaluate/reflect on their own thinking, progress, and approach.	11	52	17.5%
25. Students generate questions (clarifying or new) related to the goals of the lesson.	6	57	9.5%
Instructional Pacing			
26. The lesson is paced in a way that allows all students to be engaged.	56	7	88.9%
27. Teacher uses wait time to allow for responses from all students.	49	14	77.8%
Student Thinking			
28. Students use various means, verbally or in writing, to represent their ideas and thinking.	30	33	47.6%
29. Students are engaged in structures that advance their thinking, i.e., think-pair-share, turn-and-talk.	15	48	23.8%
Student Groups			
30. Students inquire, explore, or problem solve together in small groups/pairs.	20	43	31.7%
31. Students are held accountable for their contributions to group work.	14	49	22.2%
Use of Student Assessments			
32. At least one informal assessment (e.g., thumb tool, ticket to leave) aligned to the lesson goals is used to check for undrstd.	29	34	46.0%
33. Teacher adjusts instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessment.	16	47	25.4%
34. Student receive feedback that tells where they are in relation to the learning goals.	21	42	33.3%
35. Students revise work based on feedback.	17	46	27.0%

Table D4: Framingham Public Schools
Instructional Inventory Summary Data
Number of Instances of Observed/Not Observed Characteristics and Percentages Observed
Middle Schools

(The *number* of observed classes is noted in the third row to the far right, under *Percent*.)

Framingham School District			
Middle School Summary Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Observation Tool	Observed	Not Observed	Percent 28
Classroom Climate			
1. Behavioral exceptions, class rules, procedures are clearly communicated.	21	7	75.0%
2. Students behave according to rules and expectations	22	6	78.6%
3. Students and teachers demonstrate positive and respectful relationships.	24	4	85.7%
4. Teachers set high expectations for learning and convey these to students.	9	19	32.1%
Learning Objectives			
5. Learning objective is communicated to students (clearly posted, explained, or referenced during the lesson).	8	20	28.6%
6. Learning objectives identifies student learning outcome (NOT student task). (Applies only if 5 observed)	5	23	17.9%
7. Learning objective drives all components of the lesson. (applies only if 5 & 6 observed)	6	22	21.4%
Use of Class Time			
8. Teacher is prepared, materials are readily available	27	1	96.4%
9. Teacher explains task instructions and (when applicable) provides choices for when tasks are completed.	15	13	53.6%
10. Students respond to routines/expectations (e.g., transition smoothly and quickly between learning act, respond to cues)	15	13	53.6%
Content Learning			
11. Students make connections to prior knowledge and/or experience.	22	6	78.6%
12. Students engage with a variety of curriculum resources and/or technology that enhances their learning.	11	17	39.3%
13. Students engage with content through a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate their learning styles...	14	14	50.0%
14. Students participate in different or tiered activities based on academic readiness.	1	27	3.6%
15. Teacher communicates academic content with clarity and accuracy.	19	9	67.9%
16. Content appears appropriate for grade and level.	21	7	75.0%
17. Students apply new conceptual knowledge during the lesson.	14	14	50.0%
Instructional Techniques			
18. Direct, whole group instruction (lecture, Q&A, modeling)	22	6	78.6%
19. Guided practice (students practice together with teacher)	14	14	50.0%
20. Small group/pair learning (students work together without direct instruction)	8	20	28.6%
21. Independent practice (student has full responsibility for completing the task)	7	21	25.0%
Activation of Higher Order Thinking			
22. Student examine, analyze, or interpret information.	20	8	71.4%
23. Students form predictions, develop arguments, or evaluate information	10	18	35.7%
24. Students evaluate/reflect on their own thinking, progress, and approach.	10	18	35.7%
25. Students generate questions (clarifying or new) related to the goals of the lesson.	4	24	14.3%
Instructional Pacing			
26. The lesson is paced in a way that allows all students to be engaged.	24	4	85.7%
27. Teacher uses wait time to allow for responses from all students.	13	15	46.4%
Student Thinking			
28. Students use various means, verbally or in writing, to represent their ideas and thinking.	16	12	57.1%
29. Students are engaged in structures that advance their thinking, i.e., think-pair-share, turn-and-talk.	7	21	25.0%
Student Groups			
30. Students inquire, explore, or problem solve together in small groups/pairs.	10	18	35.7%
31. Students are held accountable for their contributions to group work.	1	27	3.6%
Use of Student Assessments			
32. At least one informal assessment (e.g., thumb tool, ticket to leave) aligned to the lesson goals is used to check for understanding.	13	15	46.4%
33. Teacher adjusts instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessment.	4	24	14.3%
34. Student receive feedback that tells where they are in relation to the learning goals.	4	24	14.3%
35. Students revise work based on feedback.	5	23	17.9%

Table D5: Framingham Public Schools
Instructional Inventory Summary Data
Number of Instances of Observed/Not Observed Characteristics and Percentages
Observed
High School

(The *number* of observed classes is noted in the third row to the far right, under *Percent*.)

Framingham School District			
High School Summary Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Observation Tool	Observed	Not Observed	Percent 22
Classroom Climate			
1. Behavioral exceptions, class rules, procedures are clearly communicated.	15	7	68.2%
2. Students behave according to rules and expectations	19	3	86.4%
3. Students and teachers demonstrate positive and respectful relationships.	19	3	86.4%
4. Teachers set high expectations for learning and convey these to students.	18	4	81.8%
Learning Objectives			
5. Learning objective is communicated to students (clearly posted, explained, or referenced during the lesson).	14	8	63.6%
6. Learning objectives identifies student learning outcome (NOT student task). (Applies only if 5 observed)	8	14	36.4%
7. Learning objective drives all components of the lesson. (applies only if 5 & 6 observed)	8	14	36.4%
Use of Class Time			
8. Teacher is prepared, materials are readily available.	20	2	90.9%
9. Teacher explains task instructions and (when applicable) provides choices for when tasks are completed.	13	9	59.1%
10. Students respond to routines/expectations (e.g., transition smoothly and quickly between learning act, respond to cues)	16	6	72.7%
Content Learning			
11. Students make connections to prior knowledge and/or experience.	17	5	77.3%
12. Students engage with a variety of curriculum resources and/or technology that enhances their learning.	7	15	31.8%
13. Students engage with content through a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate their learning styles...	3	19	13.6%
14. Students participate in different or tiered activities based on academic readiness.	0	22	0.0%
15. Teacher communicates academic content with clarity and accuracy.	16	6	72.7%
16. Content appears appropriate for grade and level.	20	2	90.9%
17. Students apply new conceptual knowledge during the lesson.	13	9	59.1%
Instructional Techniques			
18. Direct, whole group instruction (lecture, Q&A, modeling)	18	4	81.8%
19. Guided practice (students practice together with teacher)	11	11	50.0%
20. Small group/pair learning (students work together without direct instruction)	3	19	13.6%
21. Independent practice (student has full responsibility for completing the task)	6	16	27.3%
Activation of Higher Order Thinking			
22. Student examine, analyze, or interpret information.	16	6	72.7%
23. Students form predictions, develop arguments, or evaluate information	11	11	50.0%
24. Students evaluate/reflect on their own thinking, progress, and approach.	8	14	36.4%
25. Students generate questions (clarifying or new) related to the goals of the lesson.	3	19	13.6%
Instructional Pacing			
26. The lesson is paced in a way that allows all students to be engaged.	17	5	77.3%
27. Teacher uses wait time to allow for responses from all students.	11	11	50.0%
Student Thinking			
28. Students use various means, verbally or in writing, to represent their ideas and thinking.	7	15	31.8%
29. Students are engaged in structures that advance their thinking, i.e., think-pair-share, turn-and-talk.	2	20	9.1%
Student Groups			
30. Students inquire, explore, or problem solve together in small groups/pairs.	2	20	9.1%
31. Students are held accountable for their contributions to group work.	3	19	13.6%
Use of Student Assessments			
32. At least one informal assessment (e.g., thumb tool, ticket to leave) aligned to the lesson goals is used to check for understo...	8	14	36.4%
33. Teacher adjusts instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessment.	4	18	18.2%
34. Student receive feedback that tells where they are in relation to the learning goals.	9	13	40.9%
35. Students revise work based on feedback.	10	12	45.5%

Appendix E: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Student Achievement

1. The district's overall MCAS proficiency rates and median student growth percentiles (SGPs) in ELA and mathematics remained nearly flat from 2007-2011, with differences in proficiency between the district and the state widening.
2. There were wide variations in proficiency rates across the eight elementary schools from 2007 to 2011. The differences in proficiency between the highest- and lowest-performing elementary schools widened during this period for both ELA and mathematics.

Leadership and Governance

3. The district has endured frequent changes in key leadership positions at the central office as well as within the schools—particularly at the elementary level. These frequent changes in leadership at both levels, with the attendant uncertainty, have created a somewhat compartmentalized school district with many schools operating relatively independently and several important educational needs in need of attention.
4. The district does not have an updated Strategic Plan. There is evidence that the development of a long-term vision for the school district, under the leadership of the new superintendent, is a priority for the school committee.
5. More than a perception, there is an unequivocal and widespread conviction by interviewees that the district does not have the requisite number of leaders to engage in key administrative and leadership functions of the district. Among these functions is the ability to properly evaluate administrative and instructional personnel as well as the capability of developing and maintaining a consistent, coherent, and relevant curriculum.

Curriculum and Instruction

6. In many cases, curriculum documentation is uncoordinated and missing several critical elements. In some cases, standards provide the only guide to curriculum and in others, instructional strategies, resources, and assessments are omitted. The curriculum generally does not show vertical alignment and is aligned only informally across some grades. The district does not have a systematic cycle for review and revision of curriculum.

7. Instructional practices vary across the district. There are too few commonalities in lesson structure and teaching characteristics to suggest that the district has developed a shared understanding of high-quality instructional practices.

Assessment

8. The district is making progress in establishing a balanced assessment system that informs and guides decision-making, though the comprehensive use of multiple assessment formats and practices is not yet evident in all subjects at all grade levels.
9. The district's capacity and efforts to collect, disseminate, analyze, and use assessment data and other data to improve curriculum, instruction, and student achievement are evolving and progressing.

Human Resources and Professional Development

10. A review of a random sample of district personnel records indicated that there was a wide variation in the quality of the recommendations provided to support improvement of instructional quality and professional growth, and that teachers were evaluated too infrequently as noted in a 2005 review of the school district. Framingham educators met regularly and productively during the 2011–2012 school year to align the district's evaluation system with the new state evaluation system.
11. Although Framingham's professional development program provides opportunities for teacher input and offers faculty a range of options to expand their content knowledge and professional skills, it does not have a clear leadership structure and programming is overly broad in scope and only loosely aligned with district goals.

Student Support

12. The district has a strong gifted and talented program also known as Sage that currently serves all elementary and middle schools and has been in the district for over 30 years.
13. The district has many programs, services, and practices to support students, but insufficient data-driven targeted assistance in ELA and mathematics for struggling students.

Financial and Asset Management

14. The district has established a good working relationship with the town based on mutual trust and respect, as a result of the district's efforts to provide clarity of purpose, appropriate supporting data, and open lines of communication about its finances.
15. The district has a sound set of financial processes and operating procedures in place.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The review team recommends that the district, under the leadership of the school committee and the new superintendent, continue its plan to develop a Strategic Plan that will provide clarity of vision and establish priorities for multiple years.

Curriculum and Instruction

2. The district should develop a standard format for curriculum documents that includes essential elements of a fully developed and user-friendly curriculum. Furthermore, it should develop a regular cycle for review and revision of the curriculum that ensures alignment to state-of-the art content as well as to research-based instructional practices, and provides hierarchical alignment of curriculum for each subject from pre-kindergarten to grade 12.
3. Through a collaborative process that includes dialogue between teachers and administrators, the district should develop a systemwide understanding of high-quality instructional practices and prioritize the communication, implementation, and monitoring of these practices throughout the district's classrooms.

Assessment

4. The district has taken several important steps to establish a strong assessment system. To maximize the potential of assessments to benefit student achievement, the district should include multiple forms of assessment as components of newly developed curriculum documents, integrate more frequent informal assessments into instruction, and provide the needed professional development and time to use assessments and assessment data well.
5. As it upgrades its technology infrastructure and builds its capacity to use technology effectively, the district should establish a comprehensive data management system that supports a robust student information system accessible to all stakeholders.

Human Resources and Professional Development

6. As it implements an evaluation system consistent with the new ESE educator evaluation system during 2012-2013, the district must ensure that its new system is implemented with fidelity.

7. The district's professional development program should be revised so that it has
    - a clearly defined leadership structure with one individual in charge and one representative professional development committee and
    - a narrowed scope that is more directly aligned with and supportive of prioritized district improvement objectives.

Student Support

8. The district should use its current systems of improvement planning, monitoring, and reporting on student achievement to focus more on individual students and subgroups of students. This focus will drive the development of more targeted academic assistance for student subgroups, particularly for students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and ELLs.

Financial and Asset Management

9. The district is urged to continue its emphasis on keeping open the already good lines of communication among the school committee, district leaders and town officials.